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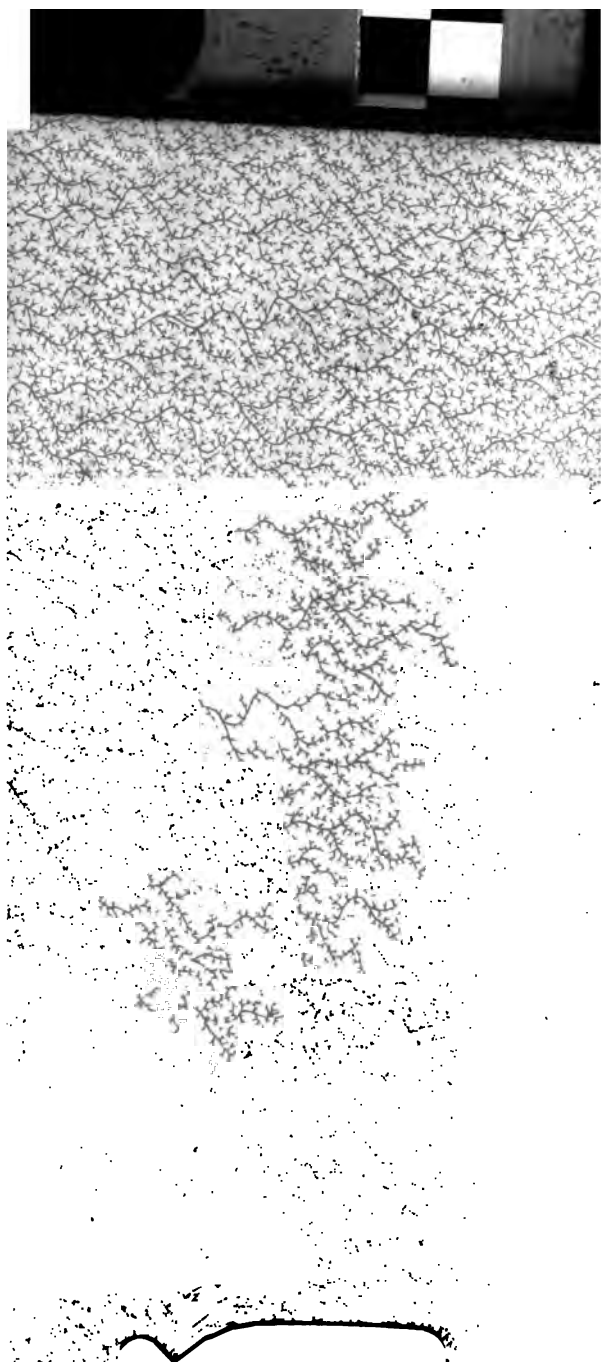
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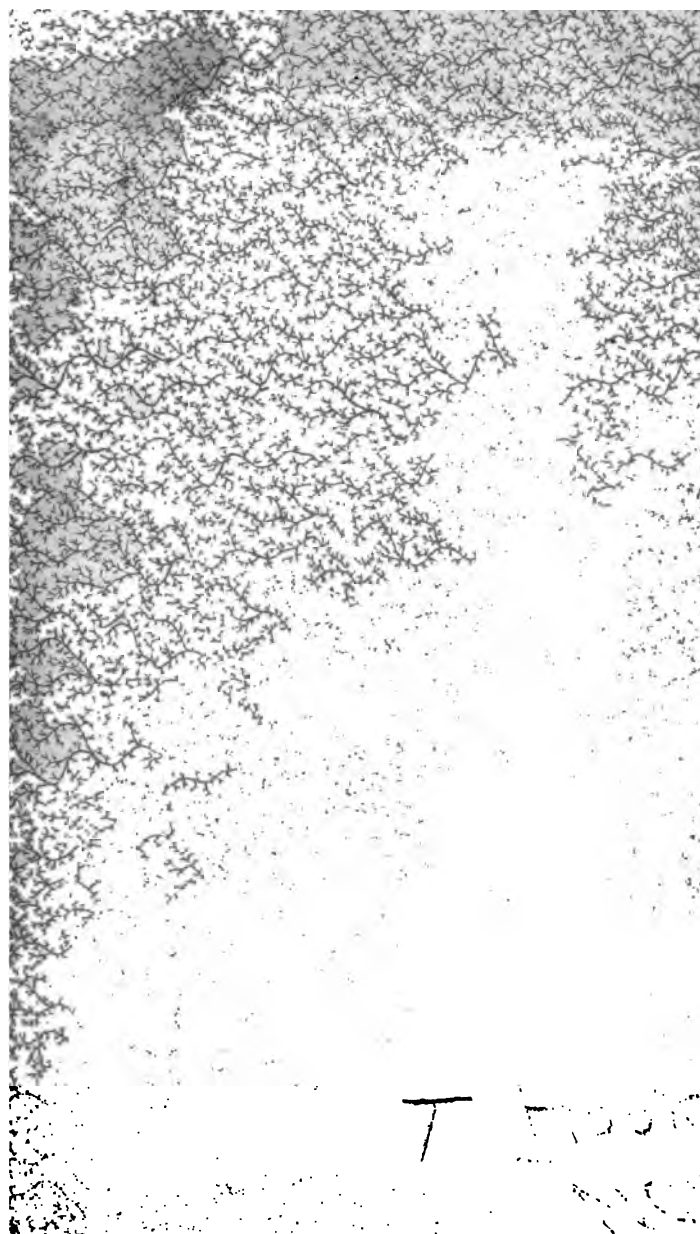
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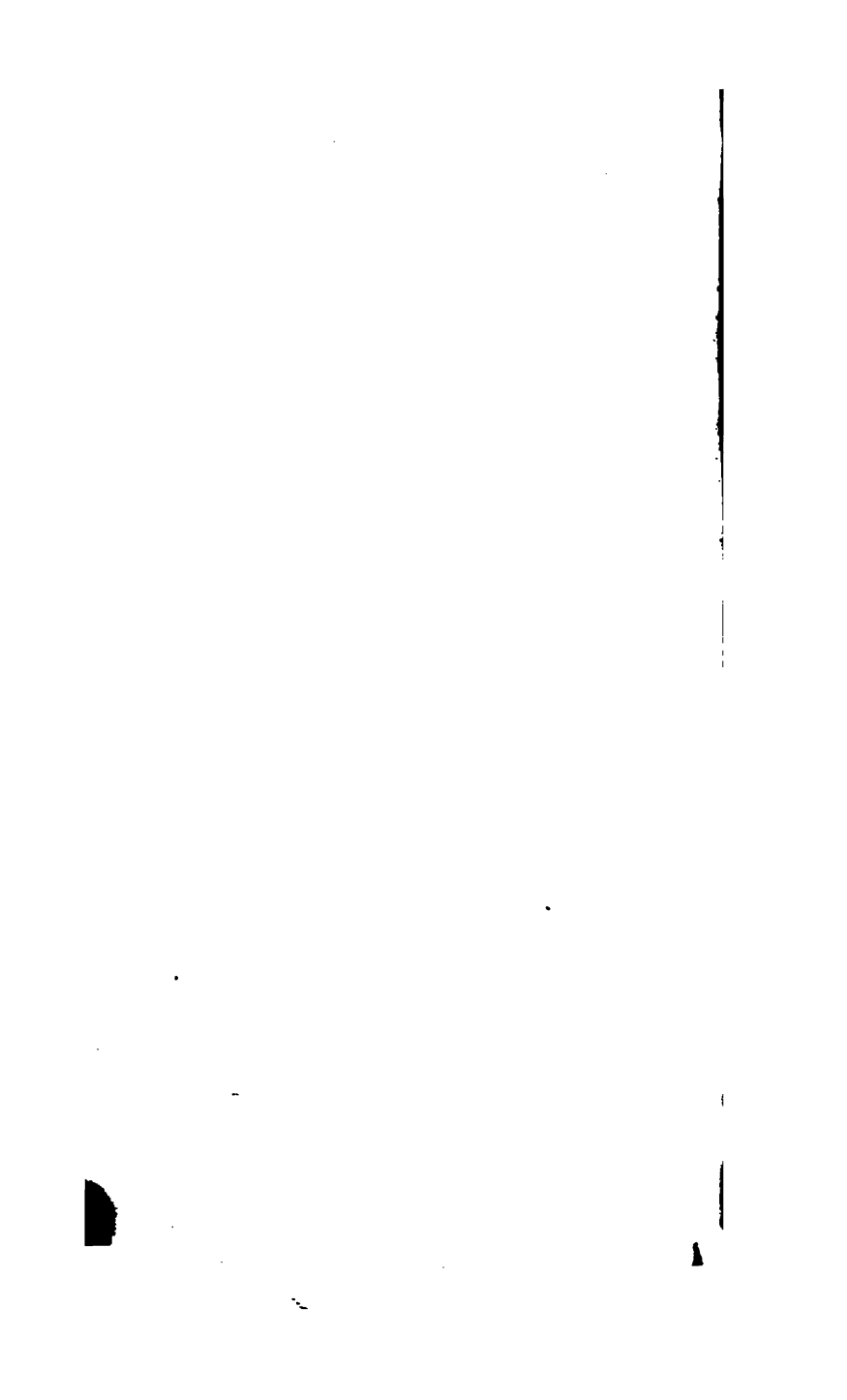


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GILBERT GURNEY.

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BY THE

AUTHOR OF "SAYINGS AND DOINGS,"

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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PHILADELPHIA:

LEA & BLANCHARD,

SUCCESSORS TO CAREY & CO.

1839.

self in perfect comfort. He has made one stipulation—he desires to make our house his home; and when the young Falwassers, his wife's children, have their school vacations, they are also to pass their Christmas and Midsummer holidays here. This is all right and pleasant—a combination not very common in the affairs of this world. Cuthbert has an apartment of two rooms, consisting of a study and bed-chamber, allotted to him, both opening into Harriet's flower-garden on the south side of the house; for his long residence in India has rendered him extremely sensitive, as far as our capricious climate is concerned.

Fanny Wells is staying with my wife, to whom she was always an affectionate sister; and we are all as happy as we could wish, and perhaps even happier than we deserve to be. I feel myself snatched from the follies and frivolities of an idle vagabond life, and placed by Providence in a haven of security, where nothing but quietude and comfort are to be found.

There was certainly something remarkably odd in the way in which I was inveigled into matrimony. My father-in-law's conduct might, in many other cases, have been attributed to interested motives, and his eagerness to conclude a matrimonial treaty between his daughter and myself, might have been put to the account of his anxiety to get her off his hands, and settle her advantageously in the world; but that cannot be thought or imagined, the moment the smallness of my income is taken into consideration. What startles me most, and most powerfully excites my gratitude to Providence, is that circumstances should have occurred not only to prevent distress and uneasiness, and perhaps worse calamities, in my wife's family, and not only to rescue us from the necessity of undertaking a voyage to India, but to place us in a state of such agreeable competency as that in which we now find ourselves.

When Cuthbert first established himself at Ashmead—a somewhat pastoral “name” for my first “local habitation”—I was very much surprised at his absolute helplessness. His servant is qui-hi'd into his room every five minutes. Lighting a taper or sealing a letter appears to be an Herculean task to him, and the listlessness which pervades the conduct of his life, manifests itself so strongly when we are at breakfast or dinner, that I am sure if, amongst the innumerable classes of domestics with which India abounds, there were such an officer as an Eatabader to be had, Cuthbert would have him at any price.

When we first met at Gosport, he was so evidently labour-

# GURNEY MARRIED.

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## CHAPTER I.

THE first part of the late Mr. Gurney's memoirs having been very favourably received by the public, I have been induced to continue my search amongst his manuscripts, in order to afford its readers some farther information connected with the annals of his family.

It may be recollected that the concluding words of the first portion of his papers are, "WE WERE MARRIED;" which words refer to his union with Harriet, eldest daughter of the Reverend Richard Wells, Rector of Blissfold in the county of Hants. After this event Mr. Gilbert Gurney, as every man when he marries should do, turned over a new leaf—in his common-place book; and I find a hiatus, "*valde deflendus*," of nearly two months, in his memoranda. Love, I presume, left him no leisure for literature: at least there is nothing discoverable in the way of detail, affecting either the celebration of his wedding, or the subsequent excursion which fashionable delicacy appears to have rendered indispensable upon such occasions; and the first resumption of his notes occurs on the first day of the year succeeding that in which he became a Benedick: and thus he writes:—

I begin a new year in a new character—I am now a married man. "Marriage," says Johnson, "is the strictest tie of perpetual friendship, and there can be no friendship without confidence, and no confidence without integrity; and he must expect to be wretched who pays to beauty, riches, and politeness, that regard which only virtue and piety can claim." Johnson was right.

Cuthbert's munificence has enabled me to establish my-



by any individual member of them. Probably, if the late Mrs. Cuthbert were alive, we should hear her talking of the beautiful serenity of her husband's mind—such a quiet gentlemanly man—or quoting him, in comparison with somebody else, as a superior creature. Now, I can see, and can hear; and it is not because of our near connexion that I can shut my eyes to his failings.

One day I had been over to the Rectory to see Wells; and on my return, I found Cuthbert, as usual, extended at full length on a sofa by the drawing-room fire. Harriet and Fanny were working, and Mrs. Wells, who had come over to see them, was sitting, playing company, the family party having been increased by the arrival of Lieutenant Merman, whose name I have had occasion to mention before, and who, I really think, is caught by the bright eyes of my sister-in-law Fanny. Whether Wells is of the same opinion I cannot say, nor can I rightly calculate when the toddy-making season is likely to set in. He is a very constant visitor at Ashmead, or, at least, *has* been, since Fanny has been with us.

Contrary to my usual habit, for I contrive to make myself occupation of various sorts during the morning, I joined the little circle.

"Well, Gilbert," said my brother, stretching his limbs to their fullest extent, as if to wake himself, "have you been out?"

"Yes, to the parsonage," said I.

"Ah!" replied Cuthbert, "very cold, isn't it? Harriet, dear, just ring the bell—~~thanks~~—we have been very comfortable."

"I thought," said I, "you proposed a walk yourself."

"Yes," said Cuthbert, "I did—I had my great coat put on and my shawl wrapper—and meant to call on Mrs. Nubley—but I met him—and I asked him if Mrs. Nubley was at home, and he said ~~no~~, so I—I came back again—Ah!"

Here a servant entered the room, responsive to the bell.

"Oh!" said Cuthbert, "tell Hutton to bring me a pocket-handkerchief." The man retired. "So I come back again—because I knew it must be dull for the ladies to be left alone—and here, thanks to them, I am quite at my ease, and having nothing on earth to do, I cannot do better than show my gratitude to them. Fanny, dear, give me that eau de Cologne—Ah!"

"I am sure, Mr. Gurney," said Mrs. Wells, "the girls ought to be greatly obliged to you."

"I think they are," said Cuthbert. "A man who has been abroad so long as I have has always something to communi-

cate which is interesting. Oh—Hutton—get me my seal-ring. Harriet, love, I will beg you to seal that letter, which I got Nubley to write for me, about those air cushions. Capital invention that, Mrs. Wells."

"Very good, indeed," replied the lady.

"Ah!" said Cuthbert, "but what was I saying when Gilbert came in? Oh!—I wish somebody would recollect for me—it was——"

"About the horses running away with the post-chaise," said Lieutenant Merman, who had not heard the story fifty times before, which the rest of the present company had.

"Ah!" said Cuthbert—"so it was—it is one of the earliest events of my life that I can remember—you weren't born or thought of, Gilbert, then. I forget if I ever told you——"

"What," said I, "on Shooter's Hill?"

"Yes," replied Cuthbert, "that place beyond Blackheath, where there's the model of Severndroog—I never shall forget it—my poor father was with me. Something by the road-side frightened the off-horse, and away we went—down the hill at full speed—set the other horse off with him, and we thought—hey dear—thought we should be dashed to pieces."

"And how did you escape, sir?" said the lieutenant.

"Oh!" replied Cuthbert, "when they got to the bottom of the hill the horses stopped of themselves—Ah!"

I perceived that Cuthbert—having sent for his handkerchief, bathed his temples with the eau de Cologne, and begged me to stir the fire, and place the sofa cushions conveniently for his repose—was a fixture for the rest of the day; and as the story I did wait to hear was only the first of a series which he was in the habit of telling as regularly as the "Friar of Orders Gray" told his beads, I left the assembly, not without receiving a look from Harriet, too distinctly expressive of her feelings to be misunderstood.

I have merely noted these few trifling facts, because I very much fear that the total want of sympathy, which unfortunately exists between Cuthbert and all those with whom he must constantly associate while staying here, will some day exhibit itself in a positive and unequivocal manner. What is to happen when the three Falwassers come from school, I do not even venture to premise. They have never had the advantage of maternal care; and, from the extremely undefined character of Cuthbert's conversation and remarks touching them, I have not been able to form any just estimate of their character or qualities. Somehow I begin to think the scheme of admitting any relation, however near, as

a constant resident in the establishment of a married couple, is at best but hazardous. Yet in *my* case it has been inevitable; but for Cuthbert I should not have had the house in which he desires to be an inmate. Besides, he wants cherishing; a man at his time of life, returned to a country the manners and habits of which are totally different from those of the distant empire in which he has passed the prime of his life, would be lost if left to himself. Friends he has few, relations none, except myself; and if ever a momentary doubt of the entire success of our *ménage* at Ashmead does cross my mind, it is speedily dismissed by the recollection of how much I owe him, and how essential my attention to his wishes is to his comfort.

There were many points in Cuthbert's history upon which I should very much have liked to be enlightened; but my hopes and expectations were vain. All the important features of his past life seemed either to be studiously concealed from my sight, or to have escaped his own recollection. His random records consisted of nothing but frivolous anecdotes which appeared to float to and fro upon the surface of his mind, while the serious facts had sunk altogether "out of soundings."

I admit that I began to find Wells and his wife, and two or three other friends, getting fidgety, and evincing much of dislike to be so overlaid—if I may use the expression—with poor Cuthbert,—who having, fortunately for himself, evinced a passion for chess, discovered that Mr. Sniggs, the apothecary, could place the pieces for him, and make the ordinary moves against him, suggested to the said Sniggs that he should be delighted to see him whenever his professional occupations permitted, and that there was always luncheon at half-past one, and so on.

This was quite right.—Why should not Cuthbert like chess?—Why should not he ask Sniggs? No reason why—except that Mrs. Wells always thought that the flower of her flock, Adelgitha, lost her life through want of skill on the part of this very Sniggs: and they were consequently the bitterest foes—Cuthbert and Sniggs the dearest friends. Sniggs not only played chess with him, and put the men all ready before they began, but having prescribed a sort of mawkish drink—a kind of sickly negus, powdered with "Mareschalle" nutmeg—compounded it for his friend, patient, and antagonist, and administered it *secundum artem*.

Sniggs literally did that, which many men, and even their observations, are said to do—he "smelt of the shop;" and when the atmosphere was heavy and the "scent lay," his entrance into the drawing-room, where Cuthbert, for the

sake of making himself amiable, *would* sit, was the signal for the departure and dispersion of the little family coterie, —who were up like a covey of partridges on his arrival; alleging as a reason, that they were quite sure they should disturb the chess-players if they staid.

Sniggs was a character—in his way; he knew every thing that was going on in the neighbourhood. The proverb, as Ray has it, says,

“Children pick up words, as pigeons peas,  
And utter them again as God shall please.”

Sniggs collected indefatigably, but most disinterestedly retained nothing. What he picked up in one house he let fall in the next; and so served as a regular gazette for the whole community. This was a great resource for poor Cuthbert, who, to keep up the simile of the pigeons, was as happy as any squeaker in the world to be crammed after Sniggs's fashion, however coarsely the aliment was supplied.

“Set the men, Sniggs,” said Cuthbert, when the coast was quite clear—“any news?”

“You play with the red,” said Sniggs, arranging the pieces accordingly—“no, sir, not much news. Miss Wobberly, the pretty girl with the flaxen hair, sir—sits opposite to you at church—hear she is going to be married—sugar-baker in London—called there just now—stomach out of order—touch of dyspepsia—too many minced pies—quantity of bile in a minced pie, sir—all meat, dirt, fat, plums, lemon-peel, and puff-paste. She'll be well by Tuesday—the mother a charming woman—asked me to dine Thursday—a little touch of erysipelas, not worth mentioning—pleasant creature. Wobberly a vulgar man—always ailing—can't get gout to show itself—gentlemanly disease the gout—gout and short sight are not destined for the vulgar—once saw a hackney-coachman with spectacles—wrote a paper upon it in a first-rate periodical—you begin, sir.”

“I move my king's pawn,” said Cuthbert: “it saves trouble to take the usual course.”

“Exactly so, sir,” said Sniggs: “that's what Major Frowsty says—an excellent patient of mine, who has a sort of hydrophobia—”

“Indeed—ah,” said Cuthbert—“mad.—I'll push him on, another square.”

“No,” said Sniggs; “not mad: you don't see my fun. Hydrophobia—does not like bathing. I order a bath,—he says it is cold;—order it hot,—says he don't like it;—can't

get him to wash;—nothing so good, sir;—excellent gentleman the Major;—did you know him abroad?"

"No," said Cuthbert; "just move that knight for me, while I blow my nose. Where has he been?"

"Somewhere in your district," said Sniggs; "at Tunis, I think."

"I never was at Tunis," said Cuthbert.

"I think, between you and me, sir," said Sniggs, "it would have been as well if *he* had never been there: he won't take medicine, do all I can; and if I say he is really ill, he talks about a physician. I believe, between you and me, sir, that he ran away with the daughter of a Bey, or something of that sort, and nearly had his head cut off. But that's nothing to the affair of the Hackingtons, who live at the white house at the end of the lane—la bless you!—their second daughter,—of course this is *entre nous*,—is over head and ears in love with the ostler at the Cock and Bottle. Your move, sir. And the way I found *that* out was, that Mrs. Widdles, at the corner—the library—told me that Jim Walker, the ostler in question, had been into her shop to buy a sheet of paper to write home to his mother, and got her to do the letter, in which the whole facts were stated. I have just sent Miss Hackington a pill and a draught; but, as the poet says, I cannot

"Minister to a mind diseased."

So I made them quite innocent, dry bread and a little honey rolled up in the palm of my hand—eh,—eh, sir?—Of course this goes no farther. Check to your king."

"I like to hear the news," said Cuthbert, "although I don't know the people."

"Why, bless you, sir," said Sniggs, "I never let out these sort of things, except to *you*. Now of course I knew all about Lieut. Merman's *tendre* for Miss Fanny; but, *then*, as I say, that is totally a different story; here we are—titled—a family of consequence and respectability; mute as a mac-kel,—not a syllable passes my lips. Delightful family the Wells's, sir;—so clever Mr. Wells,—what a preacher!—makes me weep like a watering-pot when he gives us a charity sermon, although I always get myself called out to a patient before the collection, to save stumpy;—don't you think he is a powerful man, sir?"

"Your queen is in check," said Cuthbert.

"A thousand pardons," said Sniggs. "What's your notion as to tithes, sir?—quite legal, constitutional, and all

that; but don't you think,—just before I take the queen out of check,—don't you think something might be done in regard to that question? The law by which tithe is secured to the clergy, sir, is just as good and as valid as that by which the first duke in the land holds his estates—eh, don't you see, sir? But I think still something might be done to get rid, you see, sir, of the objectionable part of the question. That's what I say to Mr. Wells. Mrs. Wells, I believe, is not so great a friend of mine; never goes beyond powders. Rhubarb, and magnesia, or jalap and cream-o'-tartar, are the extremes, and those only for the housemaids. Still I have a high regard for them all. I think the tithe system operates unequally, sir. I take your rook;—you didn't see *that*, sir. All clergymen are not alike. I recollect reading, sir, that Dr. Prideaux—I don't know if you know much of him,—said that some men enter upon their cures with as little knowledge of divinity as the meanest of their congregation—eh!—heard the story of human felicity,—something inside of a pig,—forgive me,—but it is an apt illustration of the stupidity of a congregation.”

“Very stupid,” said Cuthbert: “do me the favour to push my rook over to the side of your queen; there, where it is guarded by that pawn. Yes, I think you are quite right.”

And then, as I say, sir,” continued Sniggs, “the spirit—the public spirit of Mrs. Wells—that fancy ball and bazaar for the charity-schools—what a sight—dear young creatures exposing themselves in every way at the stalls, and selling things for fifteen shillings which they bought for five—passing them off, of course, for their own. Why now there's that Mrs. Fletcher,—I declare that woman ought no more to have gone out Tuesday week—Oh! sir, such a state she is in—such a complication of disorders—of course this is *entre nous*—what I call death in the pot—never mind—people must die when their time comes. I have put her through a regular course of steel—done all I could. Don't you recollect, sir, the story of the sick man at the watering-place, who was sent down to tone himself up—went to a boarding-house—ignorant creature—that sort of thing—took all sorts of bitters to strengthen himself and bring him round, under the advice of one of those refined physicians who pick up guineas from ninnies, as I should say; and having dined and supped with his fellow-boarders, retired, as they did, to rest. In the middle of the night, the whole house was alarmed by noises much resembling those of a rabid dog, attended with a stamping of feet along the different passages of the house. This continued some time, but about two o'clock in

the morning it subsided, and, as they say in the account of a naval action, 'the boarders had it all to themselves.'

"In the morning, complaints having been made to the matron, or whatever the female figure-head of such establishments is called, as to the row, she remonstrated with the patient, and begged to know why he disturbed the inmates of her else peaceable house? 'Why, mam,' said he, 'I am ordered to do it by my physicians, for the good of my health; which is the thing for which I am come here'—mark the English, sir. 'So,' says she, 'make a noise for the benefit of your health?' 'Yes,' says he, 'in conjunction with the wine which I drank at dinner.' 'How is that?' said the lady, who doubted whether her guest was more knave or fool. 'Yes,' said he, 'my doctor ordered me to come down here to take port wine at dinner every day, and bark every night; and so I will, let the consequences be what they may.' Don't you see, sir?—eh?—bark,—to bark at night—there was the mistake—your king's in check."

"That's a very good story," said Cuthbert; "not but that bark is a very good thing to strengthen people—as for port wine, I can't touch it—drinking it is to me like having a peppered birch-broom poked down my throat."

"Never tried, Highness," said Sniggs, "as the King of Prussia said to the soldier—ever heard that, sir? The King of Prussia fond of music—hundred thousand men to sing one song—recollect—check—he once took a fancy to a brave grenadier—story of the bullet for the watch—that you have heard—never mind, *n'importe*. The King of Prussia says to the grenadier, 'Can you play the fiddle?' What d'ye think he answered, sir? 'Can't guess.' Never tried, Highness—new story that—ah, sir!—dear me, you have taken my knight."

"Just take it off the board for me, will you?" said Cuthbert, wholly unable from habit to lift a piece of ivory so ponderous.

"Talking of knights," said Cuthbert, and looking at his knight's horse's head, "did I ever tell you the story of my being run away with down Shooter's Hill, when I was quite a boy?"

"Shooter's Hill!" said Sniggs, with extremely well-acted curiosity; "no, I think not, sir."

"Well, it was very remarkable," said Cuthbert. "My poor father and I were going in a post-chaise just by the place where there is now a sort of castle in imitation of Severndroog, and something by the road-side frightened the off-horse, and away he went: this frightened the other, and

they went down the hill at a tremendous rate, and every body thought we should be dashed to atoms, and you never—ah!—saw such a sight in your life—ah!”

“Well, sir,” said Sniggs (who, like every body else who had been at Ashmead, had heard Cuthbert’s pet story over and over again,) “and what happened?”

“Why,—ah!” said Cuthbert, nearly exhausted by the exertion of relating the adventure; luckily, when they got to the bottom of the hill the horses stopped of themselves.”

“Very lucky, indeed,” said Sniggs; “disappointed the surgeon there, sir—check to your king.”

“Ah! that’s a serious check,” said Cuthbert; “I must think about *that*. Will you just ring the bell, doctor—I must send for my snuff. Ah! and now you *are* up, do me the kindness just to stir the fire.”

“Check to *my* king,” continued Cuthbert; “umph—so, so—Hutton, my snuff-box—see what o’clock it is—ah!”

“It is past four, sir,” said Sniggs, looking at his watch. “We shall scarcely have light enough to finish the game.”

“Ah!” said Cuthbert, “I am afraid we shall—I don’t see how to get my king out of this scrape;” and hereupon the player fell into one of those lengthened reveries which are the characteristics of this noble and scientific diversion.

Hutton brought the snuff-box—he stood unheeded; at length Cuthbert, raising his eyes from the board with all the gravity of the automaton, looked vacantly at him for half a minute, until Hutton felt it necessary to recall his master to a sense of his situation, and said, “The snuff-box, sir.”

“Oh!” sighed Cuthbert, “open it for me, Hutton—this is a puzzler—ah!” saying which he, with apparent difficulty, carried the pinch he had taken from the box to its destination.

Franklin says, that by playing at chess we learn:—

“First. Foresight, which looks a little into futurity—consider the consequences that may attend an action; for it is continually occurring to the player, ‘If I move this piece, what will be the advantage of my new situation? What use can my adversary make of it to annoy me? What other moves can I make to support it, and to defend myself from his attacks?’

“Secondly. Circumspection, which surveys the whole board or scene of action—the relations of the several pieces and situations—the dangers they are perpetually exposed to—the several possibilities of their aiding each other—the probabilities that the adversary may take this or that move, and attack this or the other piece; and what different means





can be used to avoid the stroke, or turn its consequences against him.

"Thirdly. Caution—not to make our moves too hastily; this habit is best acquired by observing strictly the laws of the game, such as, if you touch a piece you must move it somewhere; if you set it down you must let it stand,' and it is therefore best that these rules should be observed; as the game thereby becomes more the image of human life, and particularly of war; and which, if you have incautiously put yourself into a bad and dangerous position, you cannot obtain your enemy's leave to withdraw your troops and place them more securely, but must abide all the consequences of your rashness.


"And, lastly, we learn by chess the habit of not being discouraged by present bad appearances in the state of our affairs; the habit of hoping for a favourable change, and that of persevering in the search of resources."

As Sniggs watched the entire abstraction of Cuthbert from every thing in the world, except his jeopardized monarch, he could not avoid thinking of Franklin's description of the advantages derivable from the game; but having waited and watched, until it appeared to him that his amiable adversary had either dropped into a slumber, or, at least, a wakeful unconsciousness, burst upon him, by asking if he ever heard what Dr. Franklin said to Mr. Hancock, on the occasion of signing the treaty of American Independence.—"We must be unanimous in this business," said Hancock; "we must all hang together." "Indeed we must," said Franklin, "or else we shall all hang separately."

"No, never," said Cuthbert, "never; they weren't hanged, were they? Upon my word, doctor, I cannot take the trouble to get this king out of difficulty. Tell me what had I best do?"

"Oh, do you take counsel from your enemy, sir," said Sniggs; "I should say——"

—what we are not destined to know; for, at the moment in which the new adviser was taking a searching look at the state of affairs, Cuthbert, overcome by the difficulty to which he had been subjecting himself, gave a tremendous yawn, accompanied by an attempted change of position upon his sofa cushions, in performing which evolution, his right leg came in contact with Mrs. Gilbert's delicate table, on which they were playing, which was instantly upset. Down went the board, the men, the eau de Cologne, and the snuff-box; knights and pawns were promiscuously scattered on the carpet, and Cuthbert, elevating himself, and leaning on his



arm, gazed calmly on the scene of destruction, while Sniggs sat bolt upright in his chair, his eyes widely opened, his brows elevated, and his mouth contracted into the first position for whistling, looking at the vacant space before him, as spectators gaze on the slip whence a huge ship has just slid into that which modern writers call her "native element," (in which she never had been before,) or the crowd into an enclosure after the ascent of a balloon from the middle of it.

"*Sic transit gloria mundi!*" said Sniggs.

"To-day is Tuesday," said Cuthbert; "ring the bell, Doctor, let us have in some of the people to pick up these men and things—the snuff is spilt, so is the eau de Cologne;—and Mrs. Gilbert is so very particular about her carpet. Ah! what shall we do?"

"This, sir," said Sniggs, "is what you call turning the tables upon me."

"It did not fall on *you*, did it, doctor?" said the unsuspecting Cuthbert.

"No; no harm's done," said Sniggs, who forthwith restored the piece of furniture to its proper place, and began picking up the scattered forces of the contending armies.

"Don't fatigue yourself," said Cuthbert: "you'll tire yourself to death, stooping about. Ah! dear me; what a flurry this accident has put me in."

Hutton made his appearance, and speedily restored order; however it was getting too dark to begin a fresh game. The casualties consisted of the fracture of one or two pieces, two squares cracked in the inlaid board, the snuff lost, and the eau de Cologne bottle severely wounded; and as it was getting late, Sniggs proceeded to gather up his hat and cloak, for the purpose of retiring.

"Haden't you better dine here," said Cuthbert, "and let us renew our game in the evening?—eh, do?"

"You are very kind," said Sniggs, "I shall have great pleasure; but I must just step to the surgery, to make up some few things for my patients; I will return at six."

"Come back as soon as you can," said Cuthbert, "I'll get Hutton to wheel me to my room, and dress me directly, so that I shall be here waiting for you."

"I'll be with you as soon as possible," said Sniggs who took his departure and hurried home, in order to tell Mrs. Sniggs, that she needn't have the fowl and bacon cooked, which had been ordered as an addition to the cold mutton, but make her dinner upon *that*, and keep the fowl and the bacon for the next day, when he did not "dine out."

"Well," said I, entering the room, as soon as I saw Sniggs departing across the lawn; "you have had a long spell with the doctor."

"Yes," said Cuthbert, "such a misfortune!—upset the table—broke the bottle—played the very deuce!"

"What, in a fit of enthusiasm?" said I.

"No," said Cuthbert; "ah! dear no—in moving my leg."

"Well," said I, "that matters little. I am not sorry that Sniggs has moved *his* legs."

"You don't like Sniggs, Gilbert," said my brother.

"Indeed I do," replied I; "but *toujours perdrix* is too much of a good thing."

"But he is not a partridge, Gilbert," said my brother.

"No," said I, "nor a goose; but the very qualities for which you like his society, are those which make me less glad to see him than I otherwise should be. You like to hear all the gossip of the place, which he unquestionably gives you with point and precision: but whenever I hear his anecdotes of patients, and his details of their disorders, I always recollect that as he is universally agreeable, *we*, in our turns, with all our little foibles and failings, mental and bodily, become equally subjects of amusement for every body else in the neighbourhood."

"Ah, well," said Cuthbert, "there is something in *that* to be sure that never struck me before; but what have we about *us* that can be laughed at?"

"Oh, my dear brother," said I, "lay not that flattering unction to your soul; rely upon it we are just as good subjects for satire and caricature as our neighbours."

"Well, I don't see that," said my brother—"will you just ring the bell for Hutton? my shoe has got untied, and I want him to tie it for me. I am not conscious of saying or doing any thing to be laughed at for."

I did as I was desired; for although the readiest way of saving my indolent brother the trouble of tying his own shoe would have been tying it for him myself, I knew enough of him to be aware that however importunate and continuous his demands upon the attentions of his servant might be, he would not permit me to inconvenience, or, as he would have thought it, fatigue myself by doing so.

Hutton came—tied the shoe—lifted the foot upon which it was worn, into its proper place on the sofa—and retired.

"I am sorry now, that I asked Sniggs to come back and dine," said Cuthbert.

So was I—not so much because, although Sniggs was

really an agreeable and entertaining companion, he was coming to break in upon what had become to me the delightful homeishness of a really family party, or because Cuthbert's giving invitations without communicating with me, or even going through the ceremony of asking my concurrence, however certain it was never to have been withheld, perpetually reminded me more forcibly than was quite agreeable, of the real position in which I stood with regard to him. I knew that the odd things which he occasionally did in this way resulted from no feeling but an apathetic indolence of mind, which induced him to make just as much exertion as might secure for himself a certain quantum of amusement. Poor fellow, he had no wife to comfort or console *him*, and I often thought that the very sight of our domestic happiness, might perhaps unconsciously somehow worry and vex him. From what I had gathered of his lost lady, she certainly did not, in any one point of person or character, resemble my dear Harriet; but still there was the contrast continually before his eyes. I therefore made every allowance for his wish to break in upon our serenity, which he could not himself enjoy, by the introduction of what were to *him* enlivening visitors.

The Nubleys were almost always at dinner with us, or, if not, "came in the evening," and, to be sure, they were generally counteracted by the Wells's; and this system of intervention and counteraction had the effect of amusing Cuthbert, although, as I admit, at the expense of my own comfort.

Then there was another torment. Where was the absolute necessity of having Lieutenant Merman so constantly with us? Mrs. Wells had discovered that he had an extremely rich aunt; and now that Harriet was married—for well do I recollect being threatened with this very Lieutenant before she was—he appeared what mothers call an eligible match for Fanny. *Him* my wife undertook to invite; and if it were an eligible match for Fanny, and if she liked the man, and the man liked *her*, it was all very reasonable and natural that Harriet should wish to encourage it, especially as her father never made any secret of his strong prepossession in favour of the anti-Malthusian system of early marriages. But still it was a great nuisance to *me*: though I could not say so, because I knew the moment I raised an objection, Harriet would have sent Fanny away, and then, *she* would have been uncomfortable without her.

I remember travelling once in a stage-coach which runs

from London—no matter whither,—with two remarkably nice young ladies:—the one in all the sparkling bloom of beauty; a sweet freshness glowed on her rosy cheeks, and love and laughter beamed in her radiant eyes; the other was pale and attenuated, her eyes were languid and down-cast, and her weakness such, that she was literally lifted into the coach and laid, as it were, upon the seat opposite to that which her lively sister shared with *me*. She seemed to be kept alive only by cordial medicines, which were administered to her whenever we stopped to change horses. At the town where the rest of the passengers dined I got her some eau de Cologne, and her sister bathed her temples, and the sick girl looked grateful, and even wept; the pretty sister looked grateful, too, and I became extremely anxious to know more of their history.

At one period, as the day advanced, and the termination of our journey approached, the invalid sank into a slumber, of which I took advantage to inquire the nature of her complaint.

"Her case," said my fair companion, "is hopeless. She is returning to her native air, but it is rather to gratify a dying wish, than with any probability of success."

"What," said I, in a half-whisper, lest I should disturb the sleeper, "what is she suffering from?"

"The physicians," replied my companion, "say that her heart is affected."

"Ah!" said I, "aneurism?"

"No, sir," said my fair friend, shaking her head,—"a *lieutenant*."

I confess this non-medical description of the young lady's disease, (partaking largely, to be sure of "*scarlatina*,") startled me not a little. However, I looked at her with different eyes afterwards, and endeavoured to convince her sister of the deep interest which I took in both of them. At a particular point of the journey I left them, and shook hands with them, not without wishing to hear more of them at some future time.

It so happened that I *did* hear more of them; and, although any body who hereafter reads my notes may not care to hear it, it is satisfactory to myself to know that the poor invalid recovered, and by the next year was perfectly restored to health. Whether she arrived at this happy conclusion by putting herself under a *regimen* or into a *regiment*, I did not ascertain. As far as the simple fact goes, there it is.

My sister-in-law Fanny did not appear to me at all a likely

subject for a similar complaint—her present turn was to laugh at her lover. Every woman has her own tactics in the great business of female life; and Fanny sought to win by smiles—at least if winning were her object;—and I must say I never saw any man more resolved upon her eventually becoming Mrs. Merman than her reverend father, who was assiduously re-enacting the drama in which I and Harriet had unconsciously performed some months before.

These words bring me to a subject upon which I shall touch but lightly, because I may be disappointed; but as things look at present, it seems most probable that I shall attain to the dignity of a father “before four moons have filled their horns.” A thousand new ties will then bind me to the world—a thousand new duties devolve upon me. Well! I have thus early in life seen enough of the world to qualify me for a guardian and guide. To be sure, if I should have a son, he will not require much of my “guiding” for some years to come, and then I may look more sternly at the world’s “follies,” and become a severe parent, as the young beau generally becomes an old sloven; but I think I shall be able to make my son, my friend;—a course of education most favourable to a boy who is born while his father is yet young.

There *are*, however, men—and I could point out a very remarkable instance—who cannot bring themselves to such a line of proceeding—who see in their sons, rivals for “golden opinions,” and opponents in the race of life—who hear with no pleasure the shrewd remark, the pointed phrase, or witty observation of the youthful aspirant for fame and honour; but who, feeling as parents do towards their offspring, and would feel, if they lived to the age of Methuselah, that they are still children, endeavour to check and subdue the ebullitions of their genius, and keep them subject to themselves.

Towards daughters, the feelings of a father are totally different—no rivalry is to be feared *there*, consequently there is no jealousy. The more lovely, the more accomplished, and the more attractive a girl is, the more delighted is the fond father with her attractions. In some instances, mothers however are found somewhat to partake of the feelings of fathers towards their sons, with regard to the young ladies. Many a poor creature has been embargoed into the nursery or the governess’s room for at least four years after she ought to have been out, because she unfortunately happened to be born when her mamma was not more than se-

venteen, who at three-and-thirty did not like to have a beautiful repetition of herself at that age, constantly associated with her, to induce comparison.

However, Sniggs has arrived, and the second bell is ringing—so away with my papers, and

“To dinner with what appetite we may.”

## CHAPTER II.

BUTLER tells us that—

“All love, at first, like generous wine,  
Ferments and frets until 'tis fine;  
But when 'tis settled on the lee,  
And from th' impurer matter free,  
Becomes the richer, still the older,  
And proves the pleasanter the colder.”

A humorous description of the effects of this *pleasant* frigidity is given by the facetious, yet almost now forgotten, George Alexander Steevens, who says, “Courtship is a fine bowling-green turf, all galloping round and sweethearting—a synshine holiday in summer time; but when once through the turnpike of matrimony, the weather becomes wintry, and some husbands are seized with a cold fit, to which the faculty give the name of Indifference. Courtship is matrimony's running footman, but is too often carried away by the two great preservatives of matrimonial friendship—delicacy and gratitude. There is also another very serious disorder with which ladies are sometimes seized during the honey moon, and which the College of Physicians call Sullenness. This malady arises from some incautious word which has been addressed to the patient, who is then leaning on her elbow on the breakfast-table, her cheek resting upon the palm of her hand, her eyes fixed earnestly upon the fire, and her feet beating tat-too time. The husband, mean while, is biting his lips, pulling down his ruffles, stamping about the room, and looking at his lady like Old Nick. At last he abruptly says, ‘Well, ma'am, what's the matter with you?’ The lady mildly replies, ‘Nothing.’ ‘What is it you *do* mean?’ ‘Nothing.’ ‘What would you have me do?’ ‘Nothing.’ ‘What *have* I done, madam?’ ‘Oh, nothing.’ And this quarrel arose at breakfast: the lady very innocently observed she thought



the tea was made with Thames water; the husband, in mere contradiction, insisted upon it that the tea-kettle was filled out of the New River."

This, and the domestic felicity of Sir Charles and Lady Racket, "three weeks after marriage," brought to my recollection the scene I had witnessed between Mr. and Mrs. Daly at their lodgings in London, and made me congratulate myself upon the escape I had made from the superficial attractions of Miss Emma Haines. Thence my thoughts glanced to the expatriated husband and the separated wife in that case; and I began to wonder what had happened to my once worshipped idol, and how she was "making it out" with her mother and the major.

Nothing at all comparable with this was happening to me. Harriet was still all gentleness and playfulness. Her wishes seemed to be bounded by the desire of pleasing me; and her kindness transferred, on my account, not only to my brother, but to the children of his late wife, and even beyond those to others who had no tie or claim whatever upon us, except as apparently contributing to his comfort, was unqualified as it was unaffected. This is charming; but still——

Here are the three Falwassers—two misses and one master. What then?—they are endeared and attached—they scarcely know why—to my brother Cuthbert, who is their father-in-law. Kitty Falwasser, a fine girl of fourteen or fifteen, rubs his temples with eau de Cologne. "Jenny," as he calls her, fetches his snuff-box, cuts the leaves of his books, puts the additional lump of sugar in his tea when Harriet does not make it sweet enough, and even goes the length occasionally of drinking it for him. Tom Falwasser is a pyrotechnist; his whole holidays are passed in making squibs and crackers; and he comes in, after dinner, as his father-in-law desires, smelling of gunpowder like a devil.

I remember, in some former notes of mine, I explained the innocence of this same word, as used colloquially to designate a certain wooden implement, in the use and exercise of which I greatly rejoiced before my union with Harry,—I call her Harry now: how odd!—and it is again necessary to say, lest I might be considered profane, that when I state Tom to have smelt like a "devil," I mean that he smelt like one of those little, black, haycock-shaped mixtures of gunpowder and water which that mischievous dog, Daly, mixed with Lady Wolverhampton's pastilles, upon the celebrated night when her ladyship's lovely niece

fell into the indescribable error committed in other days by the dairy-maid of Dr. Green, the Gloucester schoolmaster, under the auspices of that reverend and much revered gentleman, as recorded by the right worthy John Taylor the water poet.

"Gilbert," said Cuthbert to me, "these children of Emily's—just give me my pocket-handkerchief, Jenny.—Poor Emily. Well, I wish you had known her; it would have saved me a world of trouble in explaining all her—ah!—virtues and—ah!—merits.—They are nice children, and I love them as if they were my own. Besides, here they are—ah!—no trouble to me—"

I could not help thinking, mischievously perhaps, of the "ready-made family" ware houses which one sees advertised about town.

"— And they have petitioned me to be allowed to invite Mrs. Brandyball, their school-mistress, or, as they call her, their governess, to come here for the last week or fortnight of their holidays, so that they may go back with her to school."

"I'm sure," said I, "nothing can be more agreeable than to do what you like. Harriet's confinement is shortly expected; but that, of course, will make no difference."

"She is a very nice woman, indeed," said Cuthbert. "I did not take the trouble to talk to her much; but she seems very full of proper feeling, and that sort of thing; and is about as good a European as I recollect to have seen for a great many years."

A good European! thought I to myself. Well, I see what must happen; Mrs. Brandyball, whoever she is, must come. "Any thing, my dear Cuthbert, you wish," said I, "of course you will command."

"No, no," said Cuthbert, "I can't exert myself to command; only I think it would please the children, and their dear mother, who—to be sure, she is gone; but then she is at rest—that's a great thing; only I should like to pay every respect to her memory, and to her children. They think it would make them better considered by the whole school, if she came here, and saw how well they lived; and besides, it would save me the trouble of writing a letter, or dictating to Hutton what I wish to say to her respecting my views of their future education; and you *have* another spare room."

What *could* I reply? All the rooms in the house were spare rooms to *him*. So I said—"My dear Cuthbert, not another word. Mrs. Brandyball will be most welcome to Ash-

mead ; as, indeed," I added, "is any body upon earth whom you wish to come here."

"I have not many friends in this country, said Cuthbert ; "that is to say, I dare say I have a good many people with whom I have been very intimate in India, and to whom I am really very much attached ; but I have no idea how to find out where they are : some, of course, are dead, and—so—Well, but I am very glad you have no objection to Mrs. Brandyball's visit. Now, the next thing we must do, is to get somebody to write to her to invite her."

"I think if Kitty Falwasser were to write," said I, "it would perhaps be thought a civil way of doing the thing."

"Yes," said Cuthbert ; "but then you know she does not write without lines ; and then we should have to rule them, and when she had finished, to rub them out,—and besides, she does not like writing,—she is too young for that yet. My poor wife gave instructions to Mrs. Brandyball, when the children were sent home, not to force their intellect,—let it develope itself,—don't fatigue their minds, poor things,—think what a thing it would be to learn half a page of a French vocabulary in a day, and take a lesson of dancing afterwards ! it's enough to wear them to skeletons !"

"I quite agree with you," said I, "that nothing is more absurd, not to call it barbarous, than the forcing system to which you allude, nor any thing more lamentable than to see children repeating by rote whole pages of history or poetry, conceived in terms, which, to them, are inexplicable, and even delivered in a language which they don't understand. Yet still I think Kitty Falwasser might in her fourteenth or fifteenth year contrive to write a letter to her governess, inasmuch as she wrote you a remarkably nice announcement of the approaching holidays."

"Oh, that," said Cuthbert, raising himself a little upon one of his elbows, "took her thirteen days' constant labour,—so she tells me—did it over two-and-twenty times ; and at last got one of the teachers to put in all the capital letters. No,—Kitty has no turn for writing,—she colours prints very nicely : she has painted all the kings' heads in her 'History of England,'—she has a genius that way,—her poor mother used to be very clever in—what they call—I can't recollect,—but it was cutting holes in cards, and painting through them—something about tinting I think—no—if you don't like to write I'll dictate a note to Hutton, and then he can take it himself to the post-office. I want to send my watch down to Stephenson's shop, for somehow, I have lost—or dropped—or mislaid my watch-key ; I dare say it is

somewhere under the sofa cushions: however, he'd better go and get me another; and then Stephenson can set my watch by the church clock. I only found out half an hour ago that it has not been going since Tuesday, when I set it last."

I could scarcely keep silence during this beautiful illustration of my helpless brother's character, which developed itself in every action of his life, if action the evitiation of all movement in which he delighted could be called. However, I wanted to hear the conclusion of his labour-saving scheme, before I suggested to him that my wife would probably be the properest person to give the invitation.

"Oh certainly," said Cuthbert; "but that will give her a great deal of trouble: and then so near her confinement,—somebody had better write it in her name."

"No, my dear brother," said I, "Harriet is quite strong enough to write a letter; she likes employment both mental and bodily,—she'll be delighted."

"So shall I," said my brother; "but it is quite wonderful to see her; and to think,—Oh dear, dear, what a heap of trials women have to undergo! Yes; then that, I think, will be the best way,—it will look civil, and attentive, and kind. I wonder I had not thought of that at first."

"I suppose," said I, "it had better be done immediately?"

"Yes, certainly," replied Cuthbert; "Kitty was very anxious about it this morning, because I think she told me the lady was gone somewhere—where, I don't remember—to stay for a fortnight,—from whence she could take this on her way home. I'm sure you'll like her—she is so lady-like in her mauners, and so gentle, and talks so well, and so very much attached to the children."

"That her presence will be agreeable to you," said I, "is, as I have already said, sufficient of itself to render her a welcome visiter here."

"There's another thing the girls told me to ask you," said Cuthbert; "your youngest sister-in-law has been talking to them about—oh dear, my head—about some very clever dancing-master who lives here; and they were saying, if you had no objection, they should like to take lessons three or four times a-week for an hour or two,—it would put them forward,—how they can take this trouble I don't understand; but they are young and light, to be sure,—and so,—I said I would ask you. The drawing-room isn't used in the mornings, and perhaps——"

"Oh, certainly," said I; "they will not in the least in-

terfere with us—only, perhaps, when Harriet is confined, we may——”

“Oh, that’s another matter,” said Cuthbert; “Kitty has got all the particulars of the man’s terms; and I had the paper yesterday, but I’m sure I haven’t any idea where it is now. Do just ring the bell, Gilbert; I’ll get Hutton to look for it, and then he can take a message about it.”

I rang the bell, and Hutton appeared.

“Have you seen,” said Cuthbert to the servant, “a paper about the terms of a dancing-master that Miss Falwasser gave me yesterday?”

“Yes, sir,” said Hutton, “Mr. Kittington; I have been there, sir,—to his house. Miss Falwasser told me to desire him to call upon you to-day: he said he would be here at three. I thought, sir, Miss had told you so herself, or I should have mentioned it.”

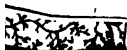
“Oh, that’s all very convenient,” said Cuthbert; “I’ll see him when he comes. Where *are* the young ladies?”

“Out in the laundry, I believe, sir,” said Hutton, “acting a play; Master Tom has got some fireworks there, and they are all dressed up; and Miss Fanny Wells, and her sister, and Mr. Merman are there.”

“Dear me,” said Cuthbert; “what a pity they don’t come and act here; it would amuse us excessively; it is quite out of the question going all the way across the court-yard. What droll things,—eh?”

This all sounded mighty playful and extremely pretty; but the circumstances, the free and easy manner of Miss Kitty Falwasser considered, are not altogether satisfactory to me, I confess. It was clear that the two girls entirely managed their indolent father-in-law; and that the elder one, fully conscious of her power over him, had, having merely expressed a wish, and asked permission to take lessons in dancing, reckoned his compliance so much as a matter of course, as not to think it necessary to wait even till she had obtained it, before she sent for the Terpsichorean professor. As to my opinion or objection upon the subject, it was clear that none of the family considered them of the slightest importance.

I certainly had the curiosity to visit the “theatre,” where I found Miss Falwasser with her face blackened, dressed up in a shawl and turban, having squeezed herself into a pair of her brother Tom’s trousers, personating Othello, while Jenny was exhibiting herself as Desdemona,—Tom’s only bargain being, that he was to fire the salute from the batteries at Cyprus, which were ingeniously represented



by one of the coppers in the laundry, which was fitted up with battlements, and cannon round its edge, while the active contriver was concealed within, from which ambush he cunningly managed to raise his hand unseen to the touch-hole of his small artillery, the first one of which that was fired recoiled with considerable force, and severely wounded the skilful gunner just between his eyes.

Tom bellowed, the girls screamed, and the only thing to be done was to send for Sniggs. Fanny Wells was dreadfully agitated, and was led to her room by the attentive and assiduous Lieutenant, her sister Bessy following her, but with a far different expression of countenance. All this was unpleasant: but what could I do? It was clear to me that the elder of the young ladies was blessed with what is called a spirit—a lively imagination, and not the most profound veneration for rigid truth. Her ideas were rather of the romantic, and although her ignorance of the essentials of education were to my eyes and ears apparent, nature had compensated to her for any deficiency of taste or erudition, by giving her a disposition to inquisitiveness upon all matters except those which were likely to be advantageous either to her manners or her morals.

Unfortunately for Kitty she was handsome, and every body was foolish enough to tell her so; which, so long as fortune afforded her a maid and a mirror, was evidently a work of supererogation. Her sister Jane was her slave, and with a totally different character, temperament, and disposition, compelled to join in pursuits for which she had naturally no inclination, because she literally dared not disobey her senior.

Sniggs arrived in less than half an hour to examine Tom's wounds, and a few minutes after came Kittington, the dancing-master, to receive Cuthbert's commands about the lessons. Harriet, who certainly was not so much affected by the bump on Tom's nose as I apprehended she might have been, sat down to write Mrs. Brandyball a letter of invitation; and while Tom was bellowing like a calf up and down stairs, Fanny Wells sobbing most interestingly, and Jane and Bessy talking over the explosion as something terrific, I was assailed at once in the drawing-room, where Cuthbert was deposited, by the medical opinions of the apothecary, the discussion of terms with the dancing-master, and the hypocritical sentimentalism of Lieutenant Merman, whom I admit I cordially detested.

"The accident," said Sniggs, "is providentially unimportant: an inch one way or the other might have made it

serious—right eye—left eye—one or the other might have gone—but in the middle, between the two eyes, is what I call 'In medio tutissimus *Eye bis*'—not bad that, Mr. Gurney, considering I am only a pupil myself. The worst effect will be a little discoloration of the skin. I'll send up something by way of fomentation, which shall set all to rights: but I would advise you to caution Master Falwasser not to repeat the experiment."

"Certainly, I shall," said Cuthbert. "Foolish boy, to take all that trouble to load all those little cannon, and then to get into a copper to fire them. Dear, dear, how indefatigable youth is in the pursuit of pleasure!"

"Ah!" said Sniggs, turning to Mr. Kittington, "good day—how is mamma—lumbago better?—did not call this morning—used the opedeldoc?—sister quite well?"

"Quite well, thank you," said Kittington.

"Well, I'll be off home for the lotion for Master Tommy," said Sniggs, "and will look in the evening to see how he is going on."

Away went Sniggs, with this friendly promise of another visit. I left Cuthbert to settle his schemes with Kittington, to whose presence he felt it necessary to summon his two fascinating daughters-in-law, in order to give him a notion of their peculiar graces. Bessy Wells had been his pupil, so the meeting was no doubt extremely satisfactory to all parties. All I know of it was that at its termination Mr. Kittington was appointed to attend Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, and that Merman invited himself not only to be present at the performances, but to join our family circle on the then present day—

"His custom always in the afternoon."

Well, this was certainly no improvement to my prospects, nor were the comfort and regularity of my establishment very much improved by the extraordinary proceedings of Cuthbert, not only as regarded his promiscuous invitations to strangers, but as related to the little nicknackeries in which he was in the habit of revelling, himself. After various attempts to describe, through Hutton, the *veritable* mode of dressing a kabob, or sending up a pillau, he went the length of having my cook,—I say *my* cook, as if, in point of fact, every thing in the house were not his—into the breakfast-room or the drawing-room, if that happened to be "head-quarters" with the ladies, whom he never left; and there instruct her in the arcana of Oriental gastronomy, not the-

oretically but practically, by superintending in his horizontal position the cuttings and choppings, triturations, amalgamations, and all the other botherations which he considered necessary to produce one or two dishes, his partiality for which he attributed to the circumstance of the late Mrs. Cuthbert Gurney having been particularly fond of them.

There really was something in Cuthbert's indolence which was extremely trying to the patience, or the activity, or whatever it might be, of those around him. He seemed unconsciously to glory in his, to me, melancholy inaction. He certainly was one of those of whom Johnson says, "They boast that they do nothing, and thank their stars that they have nothing to do; who sleep every night till they can sleep no longer, and rise only to take sufficient exercise to enable them to sleep again"—in this particular the likeness failed, for Cuthbert took none—"who prolong the reign of darkness by double curtains, and never see the sun but to tell him how they hate his beams; whose whole labour is to vary the posture of indulgence, and whose day differs from their night only as a couch or a chair differs from a bed."

Well, then came another worry. Harriet, first prejudiced against my poor friend Sniggs by her mother, who certainly entertained a sneaking mistrust of his professional skill, and now, in the case of becoming a mother, still more disinclined to attempt to conquer her dislike, resolved, even if she were to have no medical attendant and certainly to die, not to have Sniggs as her "doctor" on the approaching occasion. I ventured to remonstrate, ran over a catalogue of names of the best people in the neighbourhood who employed him; but all in vain: to her the loss of her infant sister Adelgitha, was light by comparison with the anticipation she entertained of his giving a sort of circular description to the good folks of Blissfold of all the circumstances connected with her case, whatever it might turn out to be. She afforded me the first proof of a resolution to have her own way upon this occasion. But then it was quite reasonable. She had, in the first place, no confidence in his abilities; and, in the second, she had heard him give relations of the calamities of all our neighbours, in a tone and manner which she dreaded lest he should adopt when her own indisposition became the subject of general conversation.

"A newsmonger," says Butler, "is a retailer of rumour, that takes upon trust, and sells as cheap as he buys. He deals in a commodity that will not keep; for if it be not fresh, although



true in its origin, it lies on his hands and will yield nothing. True or false, it is all one to him; for novelty being the grace of both, a truth grows stale as well as a lie: and as a slight suit will last as well as a better, while the fashion holds, a lie will serve as well as truth, till new ones come up. He is little concerned whether it be good or bad, for that does not make it more or less news; and if there be any difference, he prefers the bad, because it is said to come soonest; for he would willingly bear his share in any public calamity to have the pleasure of hearing and telling it. He tells news, as men do money, with his fingers, for he assures them it comes from very good hands. The whole business of his life is like that of a spaniel, to fetch and carry, and when he does it well he is clapped on the back and fed for it; for he does not take it altogether, like a gentleman, for his pleasure: but when he lights on a considerable parcel of news, he knows where to put it off for a dinner, and quarters himself upon it, until he has eaten it out; and, by this means, he drives a trade, by retrieving the first news to truck it for the first meat in season; and, like the old Roman luxury, ransacks all seas and lands to please his palate."

Such a man Harriet set down Sniggs to be. And there are certain points upon which a woman must neither be thwarted nor disturbed. Harriet was about to assume a new character in the world—so was I; but then, dear soul, she was so much more personally concerned with the change, that the moment she expressed her decided aversion from calling Sniggs into council, I resolved that he should most certainly not be admitted. But, as one likes to live peaceably with his neighbours, and as Sniggs was, I am sure, a kind-hearted man, and, as I believe, an able practitioner, I saw at once that the only way to sooth his feelings and moderate his anger at being excluded, would be to send to London for some most extraordinary popular accoucheur, a baronet if possible, but decidedly not below the degree of knighthood, whose unquestioned claims would set to rest in a moment the uneasiness of the Blissfold apothecary, even though the magnate himself had in other days filled a similar situation to his own.

All these things worried me. I have a strong feeling that genius and talent are to be found in thousands of places besides the highest, if one only knew where to hit them; and *that* not only in medicine and surgery, but in every art and science in the world, which, without some accidental circumstance, some coincidence for which none of us are prepared, to bring them into notice, remain to

"Waste their 'powers' on the desert air."

In no pursuit is this truth more evident than that of literature. If ever I should have an influence over publishers,—which, since my literary hopes were nipped in the bud by the unequivocal condemnation of my first and only farce at the Haymarket playhouse, now seven years ago, is not likely,—I would endeavour to impress upon their minds the vast injustice they do, not only to the said genius and talent, but to themselves, in unequivocally rejecting works by unknown authors. Every author must be at first unknown, and every author must write a first work—unless, indeed, he could adopt the course proposed by an Irish gentleman who wished to learn German.—"The first half-dozen lessons, sir," said the master, "are tedious, difficult, and disagreeable; but after *that*, you will begin to appreciate the beauties of the language."—"Then, sir," said Mr. O'Bralaghan, "hadn't we better begin with the seventh?"

One of the strongest proofs that genius must triumph without the aid of a name, is to be found in the anonymous publication of "Waverley." Of the author of "Waverley," when it first appeared, who knew any thing? Not a human being supposed that this leader of the most splendid course of fiction that ever graced the annals of our literature would have been rejected—most probably unread—because it bore no known writer's name on its title-page! The supposition is perfectly natural. Such things happen every day, as injudiciously as unjustly; and sure I am, that, if I were a writer enjoying a considerable share of popularity, derived more perhaps from good fortune than merit, I should be the first to endeavour to overturn this system of exclusion, and give every man or woman of talent (equal in all probability to my own, although kept in obscurity by adverse circumstances) a fair chance of starting in the race, if not for fame, at least for *that* which, in these mercenary days, is perhaps a more substantial reward for their labours.

However, able or not, skilful or a bungler, wise or foolish, my wife will not have Sniggs; so I must look out.

In the course of the afternoon, peace was perfectly re-established, and Cuthbert, quite overcome by the effort of hearing Sniggs's scientific description of Tom's accident, and making his arrangements with Mr. Kittington, was reclining on the sofa, with Kitty sitting rubbing his ankles, and Jenny bathing his temples with what his man Hutton called "O go along," meaning thereby "Eau de Cologne." Tom, with his head dressed like Cupid, but in every other

respect looking like an imp, was seated at a table thumbing over a book, which he affected to be reading, and Fanny Wells was occupied in painting a rose upon the top of a paper card-box.

"Well," said I, as I entered the room, "the invitation to Mrs. Brandyball is gone—are you pleased, Kitty?"

"Oh yes, uncle," said Kitty, "it will make her so good-natured to us when we go back."

"Ah, poor things," said Cuthbert, "they have enough to do when they are at school. Oh dear! Well, Gilbert, I have settled about the dancing. He can come very early in the morning twice a-week, and about the middle of the day on the other two days; but he seems to think you must have the carpet taken up in the drawing-room. They can't do their—what does he call them?—some of the steps—on a carpet. So I told him I thought it would take great labour to do that; but Hutton says that he, and James, and the coachman, can take it up in an hour."

"Yes," said I, not quite gratified at the proposal of uncarpeting the best room in my house, and converting it into a dancing-school; the more especially as it joined our own bed-room, and as the early lessons might in some degree interfere with Harriet's morning slumbers. However, I *said* yes.

"What a nice little foot Mr. Kittington has got!" said Kitty Falwasser, as she rubbed, as I thought with an air of invidious comparativeness, those of Cuthbert.

"La, my dear child," said Fanny, "how came you to notice that?"

"I'm sure I don't know, cousin," said Kitty; "I always look at gentlemen's feet. He is a very nice man altogether I think, and so does cousin Bessy."

Yes, thought I, and *you* are a very nice young lady; however, the holidays don't last for ever.

"He is quite a swell," said Tom, looking out from under the bandage which Sniggs had applied to his darkening eyes.

Charming boy, said I to myself.

"Much smarter than the chap as teaches at Doctor Brushers's."

"Tom," said I, "what sort of a master is the doctor?"

"He's a rum-un to look at," said Tom; "a hold chap and wears a wig, all fuzzy out, and we sticks pens hinto hit, whichever on us his behind im hat lesson time."

"Is he much in school himself?" said I.

"Not a great deal," said Tom; "he's a good deal hover

at the White Art; he's a dab at billiards, and e's halmost halways hat hit: yet e wollops hus like sacks if he kitches us playing marvels for hany thing."

"Are there many boys at the school?" said I, marvelling myself at the style of Tom's language and his mode of pronunciation, of which, as he was always, till the recent accident, somewhere out of sight playing with gunpowder, I had not had any great previous experience.

"Ow many?" said Tom, "heighty-height last alf."

"Are you kept very hard at work, my dear boy?" said Cuthbert, looking at him with a mingled expression of affection and compassion, which to me appeared most absurd.

"Oh, yes, pa," said Tom, "I believe so too; we get hup at six—two minutes hallowed todress—then down to prayers. Billy Dixon gabbles them over fast enough, I can tell you. Old Brusher don't get hup himself so hearily."

"And who is Billy Dixon, dear?" said Cuthbert, in a tone of inquiry so pathetic, that, although he *was* my brother, I could scarcely help laughing.

"Billy Dixon," said Tom, "is one of the hushers: is name is Williams. All the chaps calls him Billy Dixon, just as they calls Opkins, the Hinglish husher, Snob. E reads the prayers; then we as to say the lessons what we learnt hover night; then them as is igh hup, does Hugh Clid and Matthew Mattocks. I'm not hin them yet. And we does ciphering till height; then we breakfasts, and after that, we goes into the back yard and washes our ands and faces: then hout agin into the play-ground till ten; then in agin till twelve; hout till dinner at one."

"And do you live well, my poor boy?" said Cuthbert.

"Lots of grub," said Tom, "sich as it is. Sundays we has baked beef—long, bony bits—hunderdone—and plenty of ard pudden; Saturdays, scrapings and stick-jaw. Hobliged to bolt all the fat, else we kitches toko. They gives us swipes for dinner and supper, with cheese as ard as hiron, hand as black has my at; but they tells us it's olesome."

"And does Dr. Brusher," said I, curious to ascertain the advantages which Tom derived from the tuition of so able a man, in return for sixty pounds a-year, and no extras—"does the doctor attend much to your general conduct?"

"Yes," said Tom; "he reads lectures to us, and hexamines us in the hevenings."

"But I mean with regard to your manners and conversation," said I.

"Bush—he be smoked!" said Tom. "If E was to hinterfere with our big boys, they'd

‘Send him to the chimney top to fetch away the bacon.’”

“What a droll creature you are!” said Cuthbert.

“Mother Bopps is very good-natured to some of the little chaps,” continued the communicative pupil.

“And who may *she* be?” said Fanny Wells.

“Oh! Mother Brusher,” said Tom; “but only we halways calls her Bopps. I don’t know why;—hit’s halways bin so, afore I went.”

“Ay, it’s the nature of women to be kind,” said Cuthbert, sighing.

“She takes care,” said Tom, “that we wash our faces and ands Saturday nights, to be all nice and clean for church on Sunday morning.”

“But I presume,” said I, “you repeat your ablutions when you get up?”

“No we don’t,” said Tom; “we repeat the Colic of the day—the little uns does Cathekiss. As for our feet, we as ’em washed once a quarter.”

“And in what,” said I, perfectly astonished at the erudition, delicacy, and cleanliness of my young connexion, “in what does the doctor examine you?”

“In the front parlour,” said Tom.

“No,” said I: “but I mean upon what subjects?”

“Oh!” said Tom; “E hasks hus hall manner of rum questions bout of istory or the Dixonary.”

“Well, now, shall I ask you some?” said I.

“Oh, don’t give the poor boy any trouble in the holidays, Gilbert,” said Cuthbert: “he is home for relaxation and amusement.”

“Oh, but hi likes hit, pa,” said Tom.

“So do I,” said Kitty; “I like to be examined, I have got two medals and ‘Thomson’s Seasons,’ for prizes in jography.”

“Well,” said I, “Kitty, you shall join our class.” So, taking up the newspaper which (as newspapers will do,) happened to lie upon the table, I asked my fair yonng friend where the Mediterranean was?

“In Asia, uncle,” said Kitty, without the slightest hesitation.

“Oh, you fool!” said Tom; “hi knows better than that: it’s in America.”

“But how do you get into it, Kitty?” said I.

“Through Belring’s Straits,” answered the young lady. I stared, smiled, and proceeded.

“What is a quadruped, Tom?” said I.

"A large fish," replied Tom.

"That it an't, Tom," said Kitty. "I know what it is: it is an animal that runs upon the ceiling, with a great many legs."

Whether Cuthbert was himself not more enlightened than his dear daughter and son-in-law, or whether he thought it too much trouble to set them right, I don't pretend to say; he looked perfectly satisfied, and I thought it not worth while to endanger his repose by questioning the accuracy of their answers.

"Jenny, dear," said I to the simple creature, "what is a pedagogue?"

"A place to put statues in, uncle," said fair innocence.

"I wonder," said Kitty, "how you come to know that so well—somebody must have told you—I could not have guessed it."

"What king of England," said I to Kitty, "reigned immediately before George the First?"

"Before him?" said Kitty; "George the Second, uncle."

"Bush," said Tom, "how could that be, you fool? he reigned after im. I guess oo hit was that reigned directly afore him."

"Who?" said Tom.

"Heddud the Fifth," said Tom.

"It is unlikely," said I, reading from the newspaper, "that the French minister will be able to cajole the emperor into such a measure. What does cajole mean?"

"To kill a man," said Tom.

"Well," said I, "I won't bore you any more, for your pa is getting sleepy; but what are you, Tom—animal, vegetable, or mineral?"

"I am a vegetable," said Tom.

"Then," said I, "what is a cauliflower?"

"A mineral," said Tom.

"I know *I'm* an animal," said Kitty.

Yes, thought I, my dear; and rather a strange one too.

If this examination were written to meet the public eye, the reader would fancy its absurdities too gross to bear even the semblance of probability; but, nevertheless, I have put down this portion of it, *verbatim* from the lips of the hopeful children with whom my house is so elegantly furnished.

"How soon an accident happens," said Cuthbert, gravely raising himself in his usual manner on one elbow, and looking at Tom—"that dear boy might have lost his sight by the blow of that cannon. I'm sure I never see any thing of the kind without thinking of the day my poor dear father

and I were coming down Shooter's Hill—near that Severn-droog place, and the horses took fright at something in the road, and ——”

“Yes, pa,” said Kitty, “but then they stopped of themselves when they got to the bottom of the hill. You see I never forget any thing you tell me.”

“Dear girl,” said Cuthbert, making a sort of kissatory motion with his lips, to which Kitty immediately responded, by leaving his feet, and conferring on him a chaste and filial salute.

“I fancy,” said I, “it is getting on for dinner-time. Who dines here!—does any body know?”

“I asked the Nubleys,” said Cuthbert, “but they can't come.”

“And Harriet has asked Mr. Merman,” said Fanny.

“And I begged dear Bessy to stop,” said Kitty.

“And I think,” said Fanny, “Harriet has invited ma, because pa dines at Lord Fussborough's.”

Well, thought I, this sounds to *my* ears very much as if I had painted over my door—“An ordinary here at six o'clock every day, Sundays not excepted;” or rather, as if I were the keeper of a *table d'hôte*, at which, as *hôte*, I was permitted to preside, rather as an accommodation to the company in the way of carving, than as being master of the house.

These were minor evils, but I could not, without pain and apprehension, witness the growing power and influence of the three alien children of the late Mr. Falwasser over my kind-hearted placid brother. Upon every occasion, before and since his return from India, he had practically evinced his affection and regard for me, and I am the last person in the world to be jealous of any kindness or liberality which he may feel inclined to bestow upon others; but in this case he seemed to me to be entailing upon himself a responsibility of which he himself was not aware, and to sustain which he was physically as well as morally incapable.

When Kitty grew to be sixteen or seventeen—or rather when she became sixteen or seventeen, for she had grown in outward appearance to that age already—it was clear to me that with her character and disposition, her unflinching adherence to any favourite point until she had carried it, joined to a consciousness of the power she actually possessed over Cuthbert, she would lead him into all sorts of difficulties, against which he had not sufficient strength of mind to contend. Of course I was not constantly with them, and they were frequently alone, or perhaps with Jane as a third;

and it is easy to imagine that entirely freed from restraint—although I must admit she never appeared much *gêné'd* by either my presence or that of Harriet—she spoke her mind and expressed her wishes with a sincerity and decision proportionate to Cuthbert's acknowledged affection for the children, and his gradually increasing concessions.

I repeat, I am not jealous of this; but I am not blind to the effect of the influence of these young people, who, although as I have ascertained, lamentably ignorant of the rudiments of education, are—at least I speak particularly of Kitty—full of low worldly cunning. I perceive in Cuthbert's manner to my wife less tenderness of feeling, less regard for her comforts, less deference to her wishes, than it exhibited previous to their invasion of my territory—if mine it can be called; and Harriet herself, I am sure, is sensible of the change, although she is too kind even to hint such a thing to me.

I must struggle with these feelings—I find myself growing irritable and querulous—I am *not* master of my own house.—Ay, there it comes again—*is it my own house?* Surely, while that *is* the question, Cuthbert should more carefully than any body else in the world prevent my feeling how much I owe him, and how dependent, in point of fact, I am upon him. I must, however, check the growing dislike I feel for Kitty—her manner, her conversation, are repugnant to my notions of the attributes of any thing so young; it seems to me that every suggestion she makes is founded upon calculation—every look at Cuthbert is studied—her dress, regulated generally by bad taste, is ill suited to her age, if not to her figure; and the very slip-off of her frock from the top of her left shoulder, meant to seem accidental and look negligent, is the result of a study of her attractions, which she fancies increased by the display. And yet this miniature Machiavel, who is at this moment leading Cuthbert about like a child, purposes to get into the Mediterranean through Behring's Straits, and tells us gravely that a quadruped is an animal that runs upon the ceiling with a great many legs. It is wonderful to see how much Nature has done for her, and how little, Art. To my mind, however, bipeds are more likely to interest her attention than quadrupeds at a not much later period of her life.

Dinner came—Mr. Wells came—the lieutenant came—Tom dined at table because the explosion had lost him his regular dinner—and, for the first time, the two young ladies. I said nothing, but looked at Harriet, who made me understand in a moment that Cuthbert had desired it. We were



crowded, and the girls had dined before; and Cuthbert, I thought, saw, not exactly that I was annoyed, but surprised, at the new arrangement; for he presently mentioned that, as poor Tommy had had no dinner, he had told Hutton to tell the butler to lay a cover for him; and that when he had done so, Kitty had said it would be very dull for her and Jane to be by themselves, and that she did not mind where she sat; "and," added he, "so I have put her close by *me*." And there they did sit, and so did *I*—not much satisfied with what I saw, but certainly not anticipating the coming events of the evening.

### CHAPTER III.

I AM perfectly sure that the growth of affection, so generally admitted to be the inevitable result of juxta-position and constant association between those whose tastes accord, whose feelings assimilate, and whose habits and principles are congenial, is neither so rapid nor so decided as the progress of dislike when once the sentiment has taken hold of one. I felt as I sat carving a haunch of mutton, which in our moderate establishment still maintained its place at head-quarters, unbanished to the side-table, that I really *was* nothing more than purveyor to the party, and likened myself to one of those mountains of flesh who were wont to cut slices from huge rounds of beef in a shop at the corner of St. Martin's court, and sell them—

“To every passing villager.”

There were seven or eight people to be helped to mutton, —of which seven or eight, my wife and brother were the only two who had any legitimate claim to places at the table. It is all very true Mrs. Wells is a very nice woman, but even she, I think, interferes more than is necessary in my domestic affairs, and seems to impress upon Harriet's mind that the mode in which matters are managed at the Rectory is the only system to be adopted and adhered to all over the world. I hate boiled pork,—so does Harriet,—a parsnip is my aversion, it reminds me of a sick carrot. No matter,—Mrs. Wells has instilled into her daughter's mind the necessity of having certain prescribed joints and dishes on certain particular days in the week; and accordingly it was but yesterday that I was taken by surprise with an odious leg of boiled pork, accompanied by a mixture resembling nothing but a dab of yellow plaster for a wall, which they call peas-pudding.

To-day was mutton day, of which fact I was fully aware long before dinner-time. My predecessor at Ashmead could not endure the smell of the dishes he was destined afterwards to taste, and accordingly consulted one of our most eminent architects upon the construction of his kitchen. The kitchen was built under the direction of the modern Vitruvius at the extremity of a long passage divided by double doors, and ventilated in the middle by a sort of open turret, which was to render the whole affair unsmellable. The result is that the servants, who are continually passing and repassing along this passage, invariably fasten, or as they call it "trig," both doors back, in order to save themselves the trouble of shutting or opening them; my cook, who dreads the rheumatism, fastens up the flappers of the turret; and the consequence is, that the north-easterly wind, which gets into the kitchen on the other side, blows the whole flavour of the feast, right through this kind of funnel, into the hall, and house generally, but more particularly into the dinner-room itself, from which the door to the offices opens directly into the passage.

Cuthbert, who looks like parchment, and smells like a Japan cabinet, is perfectly indifferent to every inconvenience that does not compel him to move. If he get his curry done to his liking,—the light yellow Moorman's curry, with pickles; and his promiscuous kabobs, in which he revels at breakfast, or his occasional pillau,—he is content; although on the days when the flavour of mutton does not supersede every other scent, the whole place is redolent of oriental condiments.

Kissing Kitty is a venial offence as far as her father-in-law is concerned, but it makes me sick to see him feeding her with his own spoon at table, picking her out little nice bits of sweetmeats, and then making her "sweeten his glass," before he drinks his wine. Well, a fortnight more and the holidays will be over, and then something like order will be restored here.

I had concluded the round of feeders, and helped myself, and was beginning to make preparations for eating my dinner, when, just as I had got a morsel on my fork, and while it hung, Mahomet-like, midway between my plate and my mouth, its progress was suddenly stayed by Cuthbert.

"Gilbert," said he, "here is a young lady who will trouble you for a bit more,—that which you sent her before is hardly enough done; just turn the haunch over, and cut her a little slice—under—there—I cannot point out the place ex-

actly—where it's brown: Kitty is like her pappy, she likes her meat well done; don't you, dear?"

"I like whatever you like, pa," said the young lady.

"Hyena," said I to myself, as I essayed for the third time to turn the unwieldy joint, a trial of my skill and patience which ended in its slipping from my hold, and toppling down into the midst of its gravy, of which it made a sudden dispersion, producing an effect similar to that of one of Shrapnell's shells upon a small scale; and I confess I was rather pleased than vexed when I saw a considerable portion of the lava-like liquid fly from the dish into the face of the odious Tom Falwasser, who received the aspersion with the worst imaginable grace, and the worst possible philosophy.

"Bush," cried the savage; "ain't I cotched it now? I say, pa, my heye is hout."

"Poor boy!" said Cuthbert. "Ah, that's it; misfortunes never come alone,—my fault—dear me! Oh, Gilbert, don't trouble yourself," and so on, until he had persuaded the yahoo that he was wretchedly persecuted, and induced Miss Falwasser to give me a look, such as she would have bestowed upon my butler, if by any accident he had utterly spoiled her sky-blue silk dress, by spilling half a plate of soup on it, in handing it over her shoulder.

I was in a bad humour, and yet those who know me, have always fancied it would take a great deal to drive me into one. As Caleb Quotem says, in his song in the admirable farce of the "Review,"—

"Many small articles make up a sum."

And upon the present occasion the truth of the line was most painfully evident to me inasmuch as it was a combination of little irritations by which I was affected. Harriet seemed unaccountably lively; and she and Fanny had some joke between them and that odious red-fisted Lieutenant Merman. I hate *him* more and more every day. What is it—what has soured my temper?

I was asking myself this question seriously, for the third or fourth time, just as the second course had been removed—if second course, a brace of pheasants at one end of the table, some sea kale at the other, and some pastry and jellies at the sides, could be so called: and I felt a certain degree of relief from the cessation of a duty with which, I admit, mingled very little pleasure—when I heard the sound of carriage wheels approaching the house door. That sound

suddenly ceased, and a peal on the bell set the house itself ringing.

Every body looked amazed. We expected nobody. The Nubleys were not coming. Wells could not have left the Earl's so early; we all were astounded, save and except my brother Cuthbert, and that minx Kitty, who, when we were all staring at each other, in "amazement lost," said to her "pa," loud enough for me to hear, "I shouldn't wonder if it was"——

What these ominous words portended, I could not venture to surmise; but my astonishment and dismay were not exceedingly small, when I saw my brother's man Hutton enter the room, and, proceeding to Miss Kitty, whisper something in her ear, and beheld her, after giving Cuthbert a pat on the arm, jump up from her chair, and run out of the room, followed by Jane, to whom she made a signal, into the hall, where, in a few moments, the noise of the laughing and giggling of girls and women, and the barking of dogs resounded.

In the midst of my amazement—in Ireland it would have been alarm—at the invasion of my house at so unusual an hour, in bounced Miss Kitty, who, running to Cuthbert, exclaimed with a look of triumphant sauciness, "It is *her*."

"Where is she?" said Cuthbert.

"Gone up with Jane into our room to take off her things," said Kitty; and turning to my wife, who looked petrified at the performance in progress, added, "it's only Mrs. Brandyball, dear."

Dear! to *my* wife!—only Mrs. Brandyball!

"Why," said I, "she cannot have got our letter."

"No," said Cuthbert, "but I can explain that. Kitty had said she was sure you would be glad to see her on her way back—and so—I hadn't time to mention—this—before, but——"

"It makes no difference," said I. "Harriet, dear, hadn't you better just see——"

"Oh no!" said Miss Falwasser, interrupting; "don't hurry, because dear governess has got something to tell *me* all to myself, and I'll go up and keep her company till you go into the drawing-room." Saying which, and seeming perfectly satisfied that her proposal for the arrangement was in fact a *fat*, she proceeded unchecked by any body to fulfil her intentions.

"This is quite a surprise," said Harriet, looking, as I thought, a little ruffled by the event—"did *you* know Mrs. Brandyball was coming to-day, cousin?"

"Why," said Cuthbert, "I don't exactly recollect what dear Kate said about it—I know she told me that when she heard from Mrs. Brandyball, she seemed to wish to know whether her coming here would be agreeable to you—and then, as far as I can recollect, Kate told me that she wished you to send her an invitation, as if it originated with yourself—so that she might not feel a difficulty in accepting the one she had giving her; however, as she is come, all the trouble of writing to her to ask her might have been saved. Tommy, dear, pick up my toothpick—eh—ah."

"I did not know," said I; for I confess the tact of Miss Falwasser in her manœuvres was any thing but soothing—"I did not know that Kitty had heard from the lady."

"Yes," said Cuthbert, "one day last week, I think."

"I didn't see the letter amongst ours," said I.

"No," said Cuthbert; "Kate's maid always goes down to the servants' hall when the letters come, to see if there are any for *her*; it saves us the trouble of sending them up to her after we get up—ah!"

All this sounded odd—there appeared a kind of precocity in her measures which did not tend in the slightest degree to exalt the opinion of the young lady's character or disposition which I had previously formed, and Cuthbert evidently saw what was passing in my mind.

"You know," added he, "the children are up long before we are—so that there is no reason why Kate should wait to get any letter which comes for her till we go to breakfast."

"None in the least," said I: "only I was not prepared to hear that so young a lady maintained an independent correspondence."

"Yes," said Cuthbert, "her poor dear mother was always an advocate of freedom from restraint; and, besides, if the poor child were obliged to write those difficult pattern answers she would be tired to death—indeed, she can't bear any thing of the sort, but when she writes of herself, if she does not spell every word exactly right, still she speaks her own sentiments and opinions. I am a great friend to leaving the mind all free."

"Well, Fanny," said Harriet, rousing her sister from a whispering *tête-à-tête* with her odious lieutenant, "when you are at leisure, perhaps mamma would like to go to the drawing-room."

"La, Harry!" said Fanny, blushing, "I am sure I'm ready to go whenever she pleases."

And up they got and away they went. I took Harriet's vacated seat and arranged the bottles.

"Sad accident has happened," said Merman, "to a brother officer of mine, Jukes, of ours. He was riding in the Park the day before yesterday, his horse ran away with him, and threw him, and he has broken his leg and two or three of his ribs. It would be deuced hard if he were to die, for he only purchased his company a fortnight since."

"That's sad work," said Cuthbert; "just give me a little claret, Gilbert—there—thanks.—By the way, I don't know if I ever told you of a most formidable-looking accident that happened to me a vast many years ago, when my poor father and I were travelling in a postchaise down Shooter's Hill, just where the place built like Severndroog is——"

"Bush, pappy," said Tom, who had watched Cuthbert with considerable anxiety thus far, "you ave told hus that story hevery day this olidays. You should ear sister Kate tell it, just for all the world like you——"

"Does she, my boy?" said Cuthbert; "how odd that is! Her poor dear mother had a strong turn for imitation. I didn't remember I had ever told Lieutenant Merman that story,—but wasn't it a miraculous escape!—we *must* have been dashed to pieces, if the horses had not stopped of themselves."

Lieutenant Merman, who evinced, by a look at me, his perfect intimacy with the catastrophe, then occupied at least three-quarters of an hour in relating a case of great hardship, in which it appeared that a Captain Dobbington had lodged his money for the majority of his regiment, and that Captain Winnowmore had been appointed—and that Lieutenant-colonel Somebody had died—and that the commander of the forces had done Dobbington a great injustice, and so had the adjutant-general, and the quarter-master-general—and so had the secretary at war, and the paymaster of the forces, and the judge-advocate-general, and the general commanding the regiment, and, as far as I could collect, the Archbishop of Canterbury. However, Mr. Grub and Mr. Snob, two stanch redressors-general of all human wrongs, were to bring the case before the House of Commons the very first week of the next session, it being one of such importance, that the eyes of the whole army were directed to it, and the feelings of the whole nation in a consequent state of ebullition.

I listened; and at the conclusion of the details said I had not heard any thing of it through the public papers; and when I turned to Cuthbert, I found he was fast asleep, with his snuff-box still in his hand, but reversed, as the heralds would say, and the snuff "absent without leave," as the

Lieutenant would have said, on the carpet. Not liking to rouse him from the soft slumber in which he was, like another Chrononhotonthologos, "unfatiguing himself," I pushed the wine again to Merman, who thinking, I suppose, that my doing so was an encouraging hint to resume his lamentations, continued to enlarge upon the infamous job which had been done, until the slumberer awoke.

In *my* mind there does not exist in the world a more anomalous character than a Radical officer of the army or the navy.—Pledged as they are to defend the king and country against all foes, foreign and domestic, and always eager to redeem that pledge,

"E'en in the cannon's mouth,"

nothing can seem more extraordinary—I should say, perhaps, more disgusting—than to hear these members of the noble services to which they belong giving utterance to sentiments, the expression of which by any man not belonging to either, would at once stamp him for a disloyal and disaffected subject. It is always to me a convincing proof of great weakness or great wickedness. If they believe that the radical reform, of which they speak so enthusiastically, means any thing short of eventual revolution, the former is their misfortune. If with their eyes open to the ulterior results, they advocate the course which leads to them, and laud the men who uphold it, the latter is their crime; and in either case respect for themselves and society should keep them silent; for, as they are bound to fight for the existing order of things, and in the case of any outbreak, would in doing their duty be compelled to oppose and overthrow it, their own previous proclamations, that what they did was contrary to their opinions and principles, would add but little to their reputation for sincerity, or their character for independence.

Merman's long tale having been quite unfolded, and Cuthbert awakened to the loss of his snuff, I suggested a removal to the drawing-room, anxious, I admit, to see the Minerva under whose fostering auspices two such promising girls as my pseudo-nieces were fast coming to maturity.

Cuthbert did not appear to evince any particular desire to greet the lady, which led me to think that his anxiety to show her civility had originated entirely in his devotion to his daughter-in-law. However, having got Lieutenant Merman to ring the bell for Hutton to come and fetch his snuff-box to be refilled, and then to wheel him across the hall to



the edge of his couch in the drawing-room, we proceeded to an inspection of the all-accomplished Mrs. Brandyball.

I found her seated on one of the sofas between her young pupils. She was a plumpish dressy woman, of about fifty-four or five, with a florid countenance, and coal-black hair, which, upon the established principle of *meum* and *tuum*, was unquestionably her own; above which she wore a capacious white bonnet, decorated with flowers, which would have made Lee and Kennedy jealous, and have driven Colville mad; chains and rings adorned her neck and fingers, and although *en deshabille* for travelling, she was quite as fine as need be.

Upon Cuthbert's arrival, the two girls leaped from the *musnud*, and while Mrs. Brandyball tired him to death with the most affectionate inquiries after his health, Kate stood kissing his forehead and Jane holding one of his hands. After this ceremony had been gone through, Cuthbert looking anxiously after me, pointed to the lady, and said, in a subdued tone of voice, "Gilbert, allow me to introduce Mrs. Brandyball."

I made the *aimable* with the best grace I could, and expressed myself extremely glad to see her at Ashmead,—hoped she had made some refreshment, and suggested that we should have some supper early, since she had missed our dinner-hour by her late arrival.

"Thank you, Mr. Gurney," said my fair friend, in a tone of voice suitable to a girl of sixteen performing on the stage, "for your delicate attention; but I would not for worlds disarrange the economy of your establishment, nor is it in any degree necessary; for owing to the amiable solicitude of these dear children, I have been supplied with every necessary refreshment since my arrival in your charming mansion."

"Have you?" said I; "I am very glad to hear it."

"Yes," continued the lady; "dear Katharine, anxious to evince a regard, which is truly reciprocal, desired the domestics to arrange a little ropast in her own apartment, and I found abundance of every thing to gratify the appetite, elegantly disposed for my accommodation—interesting creatures! It is most satisfactory to a solicitous preceptress to discover in acts of kindness and consideration like these, the delightful evidence of affection, resulting perhaps in the present instance from a strict adherence to the principle, that where kindness governs in the place of anger, the pupil always receives instruction with gratitude."

This euphonic oration startled me, not only by its manner

but its matter. The woman appeared to me to have swallowed half a score of her own copy-books, the examples in which she was now delivering out of her lips: but this being merely ridiculous, I thought I might be amused by her absurdity. What really *did* startle me was the coolness with which the interesting Katharine had given her orders for preparing a snug dinner for her high-flying schoolmistress in *her* room, without inquiring of me or Harriet whether she might do so or not. Nor was this all, for under Hutton's directions, my butler, it seems, had furnished forth wines "of sorts" for the banquet, of which—I speak it with diffidence and reserve—it appeared to me that my fair friend had imbibed no very inconsiderable quantity.

"I have been just expressing to Mrs. Gurney," said Mrs. Brandyball, "the sentiments of admiration which I entertain for the beauties of this vicinage; it was so late when I arrived, that the shades of evening had thrown their mantle over the beauties of Nature; it was, however, impossible not to perceive by the outlines of the surrounding scenery how very beautiful it must be in a more genial season of the year."

"I think," said I, "you flatter us too much; the country about us is very pretty, but—" "Oh," said the lady, smiling her best, "*my* opinion is, that courtesy should ever be accompanied with candour; and although to err is human, to forgive divine," as far as I am capable of forming a judgment upon such subjects, I think the drive from the coast hitherwards is quite charming."

"I hope," said I, "that we shall improve your favourable impression during your stay."

"I have explained to Mrs. Gurney," said Mrs. Brandyball, "the cause of my somewhat premature appearance here. I really entertain so sincere a regard—I might almost denominate it a maternal affection—for these two dear creatures, that I ventured in some measure to overstep the ordinary regulations of society by accepting my dear Katharine's invitation; but, as I say, affectation is at best but a deformity, and conciliatory manners command esteem—so that when the dear girl wrote to beg me to come, I came without reflecting how much perhaps I ventured to intrude."

I bowed—though it was evident that Kitty, in the course of the second dinner in what this eloquent lady called *her* apartment, had explained to her the whole of the manœuvre which had failed, with regard to the invitation which was to have been sent to her.

"Oh, Mr. Gurney," continued the lady, "'a good educa-

tion is the foundation of happiness, and ignorance is the parent of many injuries,' and this I say, because a good maxim is never out of season. Now I have had these dear creatures under my care five years, nay, more—the course of Time is so rapid, and I may say so imperceptible, in fact like the varied movements of the vast universe, that one is unconscious of its flight—and I declare that I never have had the smallest reason to find fault with either of them—as I say, perfect idleness is perfect weariness, and of all prodigality that of time is the worst. Defer not till to-morrow what you can do-day; indeed, I find lazy folks take the most pains—but I do assure you that my two young charges appear to me to possess a felicitous mixture of talent and genius, with a desire to improve their natural advantages by a sedulous devotion to the more abstruse studies."

Studies, thought I—of quadrupeds running about upon the ceiling with a great many legs—or of geography, sailing into an Asiatic Mediterranean through Behring's Straits—however, I saw what my florid, black-haired lady was, in a moment, and felt not the slightest disposition to amuse myself with the animal *rouge et noir*. Besides, as Cuthbert and the people he called his children were to be pleased by any attention paid to our newly-arrived guest, I resolved to put a good face on the matter, convinced that the fine language of my new friend was only plating, and that after a day or two we should scrape our way to the real material.

I was somewhat relieved from the overflow of Mrs. Brandyball's loquacity by Harriet, who, I suppose, saw that I had had enough of it,—to use a phrase which the euphonic lady never would have adopted,—and who came to remind me that Cuthbert was looking whistfully for his whist—the hint was enough; and I began to make up his little party by inquiring if Mrs. Brandyball would like to cut in.

"No, my dear sir," said the fascinating Hedgehog; "I invariably decline card-playing. Malice never wants a mark to shoot at; and, although regarding the subject with an unprejudiced eye, I see really no moral interdiction to such a relaxation, I think it better not to gratify myself by an amusement which the rigid might censure; I feel it is always right to comply with cheerfulness where necessity enjoins; so, as every condition has its troubles, I give up upon principle what might, in the estimation of the liberal portion of mankind, be considered little else than a relief from mental labour."

The effort she made to decline the whist was as palpable

as that which an ill-bred child makes to say, "No, I thank you," when asked to eat or drink something which he or she particularly wishes for, but has been taught by some vulgar person to refuse as a matter of delicacy.

Mrs. Wells and I played against Cuthbert and Harriet; Merman of course "sat out" with Fanny; and Mrs. Brandyball enjoyed herself amazingly with the two girls, who sat on either side of her, soaking their hands in hers.

This was dull work for the new arrival, I presume; but, luckily for all parties, Sniggs dropped in to look at Tom's wounds, which were very parliamentarily divided between the eyes and nose. When he came half stepping half bounding into the room, the vivacious Brandyball seemed quite astounded. I heard Kitty put her to rights in a moment. "The apothecary," said Kate; and immediately Brandyball drew herself up, and looked hatchets and carving-knives at him.

"Been to see Master Tom," said Sniggs, who had visited the lout in his room, to which he had been conveyed under the orders of his sister, who had no desire to be bored with his society after the arrival of her governess, although she would have so much missed his company at dinner. "All going on well—slight discoloration—gone by to-morrow—pulse good—tongue clean—every thing as it should be—shocking affair, Mr. Gurney—have you heard?—Hawkins, the butterman, has bolted—off to America—always suspicious—martyr to hepatitis—wife pretty woman—attended her in four of her confinements—fine family—troubled a little with rheumatism—sitting in the parlour with her back to the key-hole—has cheated every body—poor Sims at the Crown is a great loser—bad for him—short neck—determination of blood to the head last Easter—twenty leeches to his temples—brought him round, but no accounting for sudden shocks."

"You have ruffed, or roughed (for I don't know how it is to be spelt) my thirteenth," said Cuthbert to Harriet, who was his partner. The word ruff, or rough, as the case may be, being, as I have discovered, synonymous with trump. As for Harriet, she hated whist, pretty much, perhaps, for the same reason that I do,—because I do not understand it;—nor would I take the trouble, if I thought I could succeed in the pursuit to its attainment, or devote my time and intellect to a game which no man ought ever to play, except for amusement, because when learned to the best of one's ability, it necessarily involves the fate and fortune, if it be played for money, of a partner.

Harriet was quite shocked at the earnestness with which Cuthbert charged her with this high crime and misdemeanor, nor did either she or her mother feel particularly pleased when Cuthbert added, "Well, I should think, considering your father is a parson, he might have taught you better." This observation set Mrs. Brandyball into a loud fit of laughing, and put me into something very like a rage; but then it was my brother who made the remark, and he was lively, and facetious, and therefore better than usual; and so I shuffled and sorted my cards, and tried to think of the principle of the game which I was playing, but in which most assuredly I took no interest.

I had hoped, when my brother had exerted himself sufficiently to scold my poor little wife about the unfortunate mistake, that there would have been an end. But no; when the hand was out, Cuthbert, with a gravity far beyond that which the importance of the affair seemed to require, said—"Harriet, dear, see what that mistake of yours has done; if in the second round of clubs, you had played your nine instead of your seven, Gilbert's eight would have fallen; and then, when you saw me lead the knave of diamonds through your mother's king, your putting a trump on it was madness; besides, when you had the lead, if you had returned me the spade, which I had shown you in the very first round was my strong suit, we should have got three tricks running, and then I could have returned you the heart, which must have made two more, because you had ace, king, which, as it was, fell to their trumps."

Harriet listened to the lecture patiently, but profited little. I listened, but not patiently. Poor Cuthbert was perfectly serious, and really out of sorts; he was worth a hundred and fifty thousand pounds, and we were playing sixpenny points.

Harriet got tired,—perhaps the scolding did not do her good,—but she was rapidly approaching the period of her confinement, and I saw that she turned pale, and gave me more than one look of exhaustion and weariness; but it would have been treason to deprive Cuthbert of his prescribed three rubbers, so she played on, and Cuthbert was so keen a player for nothings that he would not allow Harriet and me to play together.

"No," said he, "never, never let man and wife play together at whist. It is too much trouble for me to point out all the things they do; but, my dear Gilbert, there are always family telegraphs, and if they fancy their looks are watched, they communicate by words. My good fellow,"

continued he, looking as white as a sheet, and wholly exhausted by the exertion, "at Bungalapumbungabad, up the country, where I was carried in my palkee to get somebody to look at some indigo which I wanted to buy, I met with a Mr. Smigsmag and his wife,—nice woman, upon my word,—I did not cultivate their acquaintance much, because he lived more than half a mile from my bungalow, and I was merely a visiter,—but I dined with him once or twice, and we played whist; and his wife and he always played together;—oh, dear! Kitty, give me the eau de Cologne, dear,—isn't she grown, Mrs. Brandyball, eh?—and so—I found out that I never could win against Smigsmag and his wife,—he was a Burrah Saab—a resident—excellent man in his way,—and so—one night I mentioned this to my friend who played with me, and who, being an expectant creature, was obliged to make up their table when asked—I, you know, had nothing to do with John Company, and didn't care a cowrie for all Leadenhall-street put together,—and he said (in confidence of course) to me—'You never can win of them.' 'Why?' said I. 'Because,' said he, 'they have established a code.' 'Dear me!' said I; 'what, signals by looks?' 'No,' said he; 'by words. If Mrs. Smigsmag is to lead, Smigsmag says, "Dear, begin." Dear begins with D, so does diamond, and out comes a diamond from the lady. If he has to lead, and she says "S., my love, play," she wants a spade. Smigsmag and spade begin with the same letter, and, sure enough, down comes a spade. "Harriet, my dear," says Smigsmag, "how long you are sorting your cards." Mrs. Smigsmag stumps down a heart: and a gentle "Come, my love," on either side, infallibly produces a club.' I can't stand these family compacts, Gilbert."

I was delighted to find Cuthbert equal to so much exertion as was required in telling this story, which produced an observation from Sniggs that whatever the Smigsmags gained by tricks they could not make much by their honours. At which Galenic effusion Mrs. Brandyball fell into a fit of laughter, and little Jane, who did not understand in the slightest degree what it meant, shook her flaxen curls like a newly washed poodle.

"I am sorry," said Harriet to Cuthbert, "that you have so bad an opinion of us; I never should have thought of such a scheme."

"But," said Sniggs, "like the ostler and the priest, now you have been told how the matter *may* be managed, perhaps you will avail yourselves of the information."

"No," said Cuthbert, "I don't suspect them. As for my-

self, I could not take the trouble to recollect what letter the names of the different suits begin with."

"Shall I," said Mrs. Brandyball, "relieve you from the exertion of arranging your cards? Allow me: many hands make light work. Every condition has its troubles; without a friend, the world is a wilderness!"

Saying which, the officious lady sorted Cuthbert's hand for him, and resumed her place at his side, Katharine sitting on his left; and in this fashion we went through the prescribed rubbers, just before the conclusion of which the servants prepared a "tray" in the ante-room, which Sniggs invariably called "an excellent *trail* in our character;" and round which, I must confess, our little party has frequently enjoyed more sociable mirth than it has partaken of during the whole of the day. Sniggs eyed the arrangements with evident satisfaction, and Mrs. Brandyball turned her head, almost instinctively, to the *quarter* in which the rattling of glasses announced the approach of some agreeable liquid. Merman and Fanny needed neither eatables nor drinkables; they were living upon themselves, in a distant corner of the room, feeling immeasurably happy, and looking inconceivably ridiculous.

When the last rubber was ended, much to my relief, not more on my own account than of poor dear Harriet, Cuthbert desired Jane to ring the bell for Hutton, who was wanted to wheel him into his room, in order that his hands and face might be washed with rose-water—an ablution which he seemed to consider indispensably necessary at that period of the evening.

Having broken up from our play, I found Kate and Jane still remaining fixtures for supper. However, as it was the night of Mrs. Brandyball's arrival—and her arrival at all was matter of compliment to their indulgent father-in-law—there was nothing in *that*, only they had not been in the habit of staying up to supper. Cuthbert, having been washed, and refreshed, was wheeled back; and we closed round the table, I, with our new guest on my right hand, and my mother-in-law on my left.

Sniggs sat on Harriet's right, Cuthbert on her left, with Kitty, of course, on *his* right. I had often heard Sniggs talk of the unwholesomeness of suppers; and as often seen him eat voraciously of them, as, indeed, many men who have at other times small appetites, *will*. Dr. Franklin was one of Sniggs's favourite authors in the way of reference: and as I thought that nothing could be better than bringing the printer to bear upon the 'pothecary, I went to my li-

brary for five minutes before Cuthbert's return, and "read up," for an attack upon our Galen, if he should begin his customary depredations upon our eatables. There he was, sure enough, "pegging away," as we used to say in my horrid schooldays, at cold fowl, salmagundi, roasted oysters, and finishing with a *piquante* bit of devilled turkey.

"Well, doctor," said I (for a brevet degree in a country-place like Blissfold is all fair,) "I see you do not exactly practise as you preach."

"None of us do," said Sniggs. "When I was in town last, I dined with three physicians of the starving school, and two surgeons sworn to the Abernethian doctrine. I never saw five men eat or drink so much in the whole course of my life; and, Mr. Gurney," added my Lampedo, "go where you will, watch the faculty, and you will find them the greatest gormandizers in the empire."

"Yes," said I, "at dinner, perhaps, but not at supper; recollect what your idol Franklin says:" and then I came out with my quotation. "'In general, mankind, since the improvement of cookery, eat about twice as much as nature requires. Suppers are not bad, if we have not dined; but restless nights naturally follow hearty suppers after full dinners. Indeed, as there is a difference in constitutions, some rest well after these meals; it costs them only a frightful dream and an apoplexy, after which they sleep till doomsday. Nothing is more common in the newspapers than instances of people who, after eating a hearty supper, are found dead a-bed in the morning.'"

"Correctly quoted by you, sir," said Sniggs; "and aptly observed by the doctor; but suppose, now, I was to tell you that I have had no dinner—fact.—Three hours at Mrs. Humbleman's—case of asthma—bad breathing—great distress—husband wouldn't let me leave her. He himself dyspeptic, with a slight disposition to erysipelas. Mrs. Sniggs did not wait for me—I away to Stephenson the watchmaker's little girl—second—nice child—scarlatina—fancied measles—I with her—cup of black tea, weak, and with dry toast, all I had—here to look at Master Falwasser's dear little nose. What could I do? so I only make up the former deficiency of diet."

"It must," said Mrs. Brandyball, "be exceedingly excitatory to witness the various afflictions of the different domestic circles into which you are professionally invoked. Experience is the mother of science; and prevention is better than cure. However, the longest day must have an



end; and you must experience a most gratifying sensation when you return to repose, to think that, perhaps, under Providence, you have been the means of restoring a dear child to a fond parent—for even the crow thinks its own bird the fairest; and greatness of mind is ever compassionate.”

Sniggs, who was not particularly sentimental, and thought more of his pills and his bills than of any other thing in the world, looked at our new friend with an expression of countenance which I thought rather equivocal, the character of which was changed into the broad comic when he perceived her sip somewhat largely from a tumbler, into which she had previously poured some particularly strong brandy, which, it must be admitted, took her by surprise.

Harriet looked at me, and I looked at her; and we both laughed. I am sure I have no notion why. However, as we *had* laughed, I thought it was quite absolutely necessary to atone for the indiscretion by an extra show of attention; and therefore begged to recommend to her particular notice a cup which the servant had just brought in and put down; and in which there was something which I thought she would prefer, since it was evident she was a judge.

The mixture which I advocated, was a peculiar sort of punch, really not strong, but rich and agreeable; and which even Cuthbert, if any body would take the trouble to pour it out for him, would not object to imbibe.

“Thank you, Mr. Gurney,” said the lady, “it is never too late to learn; and although I seldom indulge in such combinations, your kindness is such that I find it quite impossible to resist your delicate attentions. I *will* have one glass.”

The tumbler was returned, the lady sipped; and smiled, and smiled and sipped again: her eyes approved, even before her tongue had spoken.

“I fear,” said Mrs. Brandyball, “the delightful weather which we have been enjoying during the last few days is drawing to a close. The moon’s envelopment in that silvery mist augurs an approaching change, and threatens an accession of cadent humidity.”

“Isn’t that mist,” said Kitty, “what the astrologers call a hayloft?”

This was fatal. Cuthbert, who was in a nap, with Kate’s arm round his neck, heard it not. Merman was leaning his head on his hand, with his nose within three inches of Fanny’s mouth, and heeded it not; but the eyes of Mrs. Wells,

Harriet, Sniggs and myself met. What to do was the doubt of a moment: the struggle was ineffectual, and we burst into a fit of loud laughter. Mrs. Brandybalk, Merman and Fanny were flurried, Kate tittered, and Gilbert awoke.

## CHAPTER IV.

seemed useless to attempt any thing like a restoration of order or tranquillity after this explosion about the astrologer and the hay-loft, and equally impossible to explain to Cuthbert, when he was awakened into consciousness, what had actually occurred; and accordingly Harriet, with an expressive look at me, rose from the table, not exactly as if wishing any body else to follow her example, but at the same time fully expecting that her move would produce an adjournment—nor was she wrong; for our fair visiter, not exactly knowing the rules and regulations of the family, which were rather lax in the particular of “early to bed and early to rise,” immediately quitted her seat—having, however, first finished her last tumbler of what in common parlance was remarkably strong punch. Kitty, who clung about her with what appeared to me a parasitical affection of affection, said to her, in a tone ill suited, as I thought, to her time of life and position in society—

“Oh, don’t go, dear, yet—have another glass. I’m sure it will do you good.”

“No, dearest,” said Mrs. Brandyball, with one of her angelic smiles; “I always attend to the dictates of prudence. The draught is nectareous, but time wears on, and dear Mrs. Gurney is already fatigued.”

“Yes, but,” said Kitty, “you know you always have three or four glasses at home.”

“Never mind, dear love,” said Mrs. Brandyball, looking furious, endeavouring to free herself from the girl’s embrace, and evidently wishing her—where—it might not be quite decorous here to mention.

The ladies retired; Mrs. Wells had gone home some time before, Wells having sent the carriage for her from the rectory after it had set him down, which violation of his promise to join us after the early dinner-party broke up, I, perhaps uncharitably, attributed to a want of the forbear-

ance which Mrs. Brandyball had recently exhibited. The adieux of the children and Cuthbert occupied nearly a quarter of an hour, and, during their progress, Kate enumerated all the places which she would lionise in the morning with her dear governess; and, having liberally detailed the programme of the performance, completely upset ~~me~~ by telling her visitor that it would take at least a week to see all the things worth seeing in the neighbourhood.

I must do Mrs. Brandyball the justice to say, that she endeavoured, or seemed to endeavour, to moderate the energy of her fair pupil; and by mingling with her smiles, approving of the proposition, sundry deferential looks towards Harriet, who stood "pageing her heels" while the animated Miss Falwasser enlarged upon the loveliness of the coast, and the beauty of the drives, contrived to convey very evidently her feeling that the whole of the young lady's arrangements were subject to the control and permission of the lady of the house.

"Very nice, amiable woman," said Cuthbert, after the party had left the room; "so natural—eh—so unaffected." Sniggs and I exchanged looks.

"What remarkably fine hair she has," said Sniggs, somewhat theatrically, sipping his third glass of punch.

Cuthbert did not see the point of Galen's observation, which conveyed to my mind, and that of Merman (who waited to walk home with the apothecary) all he meant it should, as regarded what the Lakers would call the "universality of her naturalness." In fact, my poor brother was of so easy a disposition, and so much readier to admit than dispute, that it never once entered his head that the ringlets which wantoned over Mrs. Brandyball's forehead were other than indigenous; and as neither Sniggs nor myself felt at all desirous to mar the serenity with which he seemed inclined to view all the schoolmistress's perfections, or fatigue him with a discussion upon the peculiar merits of the "soft illusion" with which she contrived to set off her somewhat matured charms, we allowed him to continue in his state of credulous blessedness, from which it would have been downright barbarity to disturb him.

"Will any one tell me what o'clock it is?" said Cuthbert. "It is almost time for bed—dear, dear—what a deal of trouble one takes in getting up and going to sleep—it is always the same thing over and over again—just do me the kindness to ring the bell—thank you—that—ah—is not that my pocket-handkerchief on the floor?—yes, thank you—oh, Hutton, are you there?—well—ah—it's only to wheel me

to my room. Good night, good night, Sniggs—no fear about Tom's eye—eh?"

"None in the least, sir," said Sniggs.

"Have you thought any more of what I got Hutton to write to you about?" said Cuthbert. "Kitty's ankle-bone—I forgot to talk to you about it—you'll be here to-morrow—come soon, and, if you have time, we'll have one game of chess before luncheon. Good night, Gilbert—good night, Mr.—pahaw—dear—Mr. Merman."

And away was he wheeled—having again invited Sniggs to chess and, *par consequence*, to luncheon. Well! I cannot help it; I suppose it must be so.

"Come, Sniggs," said I, "let us finish the jug."

"What!" said Sniggs, "you are in the jugular vein to-night, sir."

I laughed, and should have laughed more if Sniggs had not made the same wretched pun a hundred times before. Merman did not see any joke in it, but talked of ringing for his great-coat, inasmuch as it was desperately cold in the hall, and he had a cough, and Fanny desired him to take care of himself. I rang the bell, and the coat and cloak were brought, and my guests packed up for departure. I shook hands with both: as Merman was leaving the room, he turned suddenly back and said,

"Do you expect me at dinner to-morrow?"

Now I ask the best tactician in the world what answer I could give to such a question but that which I did?

"Too happy to see you."

That I was sincere in saying so, I cannot assert, and yet the invitation, or rather the admission, to my house was sincerely offered. I have already said I disliked Merman; but those who were loved by those whom I loved, were fond of him, and enjoyed his society: so that although, as directly relating to Merman and myself, that which I said was not true—still, as affecting the pleasure and amusement of others upon whom my regards were reflected from her who was all the world to me, I conscientiously said that I should be happy to see him. "For *their* sakes," was the mental reservation. However, as he *was* to come, and I could not hope to enjoy my much-desired domestic meal while Mrs. Brandyball stayed, I resolved upon having Wells of the party, and accordingly begged Merman, who would, in all probability, see him before I should in the morning, to ask him to join us; still, I admit wondering to myself how the reverend gentleman came to permit the affair between Fanny and the lieutenant to linger on so long without coming to a decision.

*My case* had been settled in a fifth part of the time, although I had never—at least I do not think I ever had—made any such manifestations of devotion to Harriet as the lieutenant has been exhibiting during the last four or five months.

This circumstance brought to my mind the often-repeated axiom of my reverend friend with regard to early marriages, even without the actual possession of fortune, and the singular concatenation of circumstances by which, in my own case, his anticipations, *couleur de rose*, had been realized; and *that* again brought to my recollection a most ungenerous and ungracious comparison on *my* part between the actual state of my present circumstances, and the probabilities of what would have occurred if I had missed my brother on the day of his return, or if, by any unforeseen circumstances, he had lost the fortune he possessed; in which case Harriet and I should have been living upon a much more moderate *scale* than we now are,—I, in some way, labouring to increase my income, and perhaps doing something to obtain a reputation, as well as profit. To have contented myself under such circumstances would have been wise and philosophical; and there was nothing wrong or uncourteous in instituting such a comparison; the ungraciousness and the ungenerousness of the process applied only to the conclusion at which I arrived, that, although I might have kept two servants instead of seven or eight, my wife would have had no carriage; and my table would have been less amply covered; that my house would have been small, instead of large; and that I should have toiled, instead of trifled; I should have been independent. I could have sat down quietly with my nice, kind, good-humoured Harriet, have enjoyed that ingenuous interchange of thoughts and opinions, which is the charm of domestic life, and if I had had beyond enough, a little to spare, I might at least have chosen the friend who should be our guest.

Now this is all wrong. It makes me think I have a bad heart; that I am ungrateful to Cuthbert. No, I am not; but with all his kindness to *me*, with all my affection for *him*, I am not happy,—I am not at my ease. Then—it sounds most unfraternal to think of it—he said he should go to Cheltenham long before dear Harriet's accouchement; and I begged him not to leave us. I suppose that may be the reason why he seems to have abandoned the intention altogether; and now I am sorry he does not mean to go: we should be quieter during her illness; but still I ought not to wish him to leave Ashmead, if he is happier where he is;

what I really do think is, that he would be more amused at Cheltenham than he can possibly be with us; especially during the period of her confinement.

The Nubleys are gone to town to-day; he is reduced to Sniggs; Wells is too vivacious for him; his mind cannot travel fast enough to catch Well's jokes and anecdotes. However, if he is comfortable, why, we owe him every thing; and, pah!—I will not worry myself with thinking about it. I will bear all the little rubs I meet with, patiently and properly, and keep my temper; or, perhaps, as my temper seems to be at present by no means good, change it as soon as possible.

How is it possible, with the strongest possible fraternal feelings, to maintain this equanimity?

When I went to bed—yes, there it is—to bed—Harriet, who had not been particularly comfortable during the evening, and, poor dear soul, felt Cuthbert's rebuke about the whist, and Kitty's pre-eminence in every thing more deeply than, perhaps, was necessary, told me that she proposed, after breakfast, next day, to drive over with Fanny in the pony phaeton to call on a Mrs. Somerton, a great friend of the Wells's, who had come on a visit at Hallowden, within about five miles of us. Harriet had always a persuasive way with her, and, dear love, it required very little effort on my part to make the arrangement, that she should drive Fanny, or Fanny, her, to this place. All that I apprehended was, that she might over-exert herself. However, she laughed kindly at my solicitude, and said that, not only she was sure the drive would do her good, but that she was most anxious to show whatever civility she might to this Mrs. Somerton, because,—what, I did not want to hear—it was something connected with her family, and why should I argue farther? And so, before taking my last turn round to sleep, I told her, poor dear, to order her phaeton when she chose, and to invite Mrs. Somerton to come to us, if she liked; and so I dropped into my slumber, quite satisfied that that matter was finally arranged.

At breakfast Cuthbert did not appear; he had got a pain in his side; and Hutton had told him he had better not get up, and so he desired Hutton, when Mr. Sniggs came, to send him to his room. Harriet received Mrs. Brandyball with all her wonted good nature; and Mrs. Brandyball was more elegant and refined than ever. Kitty had breakfasted, so had Jane, but still they were supporters to their governess's arms, and were, as usual, on her dexter and sinister side. Tom was proscribed, much to my delight; Kitty

having denounced him as not presentable with a piece of plaster on his face, cut diagonally, and stuck over his mouth, like a hatchment over a window.

Mrs. Brandyball seemed to enjoy her breakfast; she ate eggs, broiled ham, and *gibier au gratin*, tasted of absent Guthbert's curry, admired the way in which the rice was served dry, ventured upon one rognon, extremely well served, (although without Champagne,) and concluded her matrimonial meal with the upper half of a peculiar sort of buttered cake, for which my cook was really famous, not only in the modern fal-lal acceptation of the word, in which good wine, of which nobody ever heard, is called famous, or a well-sized room, or a well-formed horse, is designated by the same adjective; but because she (for it was a she) was really famous in the neighbourhood for her excellence in contriving a delusive, delicious, and destructive compound of something that seemed light and melting in the mouth, but which was in fact of the heaviest and most indigestible order; and which, when well saturated with butter, was at once one of the most agreeable and most dreadful things ever invented, always excepting a before-mentioned Shrapnell shell or a Congreve rocket.

I looked at my bonny Brandyball as she fed, as I had been wont to look, as a boy, at Garnerin's balloons, when the method of filling them was much more tedious and expensive than it afterwards became; and my feeling—save and except that the *materiel* was my own—was not very dissimilar from that which I had upon those occasions experienced; for, although the process went on with what appeared to me most admirable success, I could perceive no visible effect, nor the slightest disposition on her part to *rise*, although we had all long concluded our operations in the way of feeding.

Every thing, however, must have an end, and so at length had our breakfast; and then came the awkward dawdling time in which people huddle about the fire, or go into corners to write letters, or begin to make plans for the day's amusement, and I betook myself to my library, where, even in the present state of domestic disarrangement, I had still a shelter and retreat, which, however, I might not have so securely retained, if I had not adopted the precaution of keeping the door closed, not only when I was out of the room, but when I was in it, by means of what Sniggs facetiously called my "Lock upon the Human Understanding," the key of which never left my pocket.

This sounds illiberal and churlish; but I love books dear-



ly. I venerate them; and it pains my heart, and grieves my sight, to see them ill-treated. If the Miss Falwassers and their brother had free access to my library, a week would not elapse before every volume which had "*pictures*" in it, would be lugged out of its place, rumped, strained backwards, thumbed, and tumbled; my portfolios would be emptied; and if their contents were replaced, their edges would be cut with the strings destined for their preservation,—for as to reading, the boy, I believe, cannot compass the performance, and the girls would inevitably take but one line, and rejecting as dull and nonsenical all the sterling works in our language, whence they might derive instruction and improvement, mount my fairy ladder, to reach from the top shelves, to which they have been banished, the plays and novels which have come into my possession, either as presentation copies from their authors, or as alloy to some valuable lot which I have bought at an auction.

It is quite true that, in the ardent desire for money-making at the time of our equivocal success in South America, a certain great London speculator, who shall be nameless, was, in his ignorance of the customs and climate of that part of the world, induced to send out thither a large investment of skates and warming-pans, which, considering all things, was not likely to turn out profitably. His supracargo, however, managed to make his money for him, although the first appearance of the speculation was beyond measure melancholy.

"Warming-pans!" exclaimed one of the inhabitants; "skates!" cried another. What absurdity!—what folly! what madness!—and the little children patted the pans and danced to the music, and the women rubbed the sharp edges of the skates, and laughed at the English mode of making shoes with sharp soles.

At length, however, things grew better,—pans and skates looked up. Amongst the visitors to the store came one day a monk, who was, like Tom Thumb's cow,—

"Larger than the largest size."

His keen eye twinkled as he looked at one of the warming-pans,—he opened it,—ran his finger round the bottom of it,—chuckled with delight at some inward conceit,—bought it, and had it sent to his convent.

The next day brought several more of the priesthood to buy warming-pans, and the circumstance induced the supracargo to inquire of one of their Reverences what had so

suddenly brought an implement so apparently useless into fashion. "You will sell them all," said the Padre; "they are the very things we wanted. We have every thing in the world good to eat here, but no good things to cook with. Father Francis has started the notion that these will make excellent stew-pans,—he secured the first for himself;—the notion has spread, and if you had five hundred pans you would sell them all."

Now, a supracargo of moderate intellect would have rejoiced mightily in so fortunate a disposal of half his principal's absurd commodity, and have put up with the loss of the skates, for which no possible use could be found. Our supracargo was not of that sort. *His* name was Mackenzie; and the moment the friars and stewers had confided their secret to *him*, he immediately drew up, and, in reply to the increasing demand for the article now in such request, stated as a condition absolutely inevitable, that every man, woman, or child, who bought one warming-pan should buy two pairs of skates,—two warming-pans, four pairs of skates, and so on *ad infinitum*. The result was obvious; the warming-pans had become *sine-qua-nons*, and the skates were therefore purchased, because without them the pans could not have been procured: by which *ruse* Mr. Mackenzie disposed of the whole investment, and to this moment the kitchens of Rio de Janeiro are stored with the warming-pans, and the museums of their masters decorated with the skates.

So in an auction, the Mackenzies of the trade are sure to assort the lots in a similar manner. Trash and absurdity are cunningly blended with worth and merit; and if you want to buy a warming-pan work fit for a library, you are forced to take with it some four or five pairs of skates in the shape of so many volumes of unserviceable trash.

Out of this refuse matter Miss Falwasser would have been sure to select works for her edification; and besides all my tender solicitude for my library, I felt so much for myself as to conclude that it would be less offensive to keep the room always locked than it would be to lock it when I was in it myself; and to have been subjected to an inroad *there* would have been unbearable.

From my place of refuge I did not emerge until luncheon was announced, at which I presented myself, and found, as I did not expect (for I had forgotten the arrangement), Sniggs and Cuthbert apparently asleep over the chess-board, the only sign of life or liveliness betrayed by either of them being a very subdued noise made by Cuthbert in the way of whistling his one only tune, which was the air of a song in, or rather

out of a farce called "My Grandmother;" the burden of which is composed of these words—

"'Tis a favour, sir, I must deny, oh fy!"

More of the song I never heard, nor do I know what might have been the favour denied by the lady who sings, nor why she should exclaim "Oh fy!" All I do know is, that this one line, either whistled or sung, but almost always whistled, in the softest possible tone, was Cuthbert's universal practice at all times when he had occasion to do what he called think.

Cuthbert's performance of this one sweet strain, always reminded me of the performance of an old blind man who, a few years since, was in the habit of perambulating the streets in the neighbourhood of Grosvenor-square, who was fully persuaded himself, and probably hoped to persuade other people, that he was playing upon the bagpipes; he went through all the motions of blowing the bellows under his arm, and even aiding the essential flatulency of his instrument by blowing into an auxiliary tube with his mouth, while his fingers performed all the necessary movements upon the keys; but sound made he none. Hence a nobleman, whose eminent talents and delightful manners have endeared him to all who know him, and to no one more justly than to myself, has given him the *sobriquet* of the "Confidential Bagpiper." Cuthbert's whistle was equally private and confidential; it would have fatigued him too much to make it audible.

"Good morning, sir," said Sniggs: "fine day—healthy invigorating weather."

"Ah, Gilbert," said Cuthbert, "how d'ye do, my dear fellow? Well, I don't see how that queen is to be got out of check. Tom is quite well, Gilbert,—so Sniggs says."

"Quite," said Sniggs; "not a mark of a bruise to be seen."

"Poor fellow!" said Cuthbert, and then a little whistle. "I'll finish this game after luncheon."

"Where's Mrs. Brandyball?" said I.

"Oh," said Cuthbert, "she is gone with Kate and Jane to the Rectory. I told them they would get some luncheon there, and, as the day was so fine, I thought they might show their governess the park, and so come round by Hansford, and look at the view from Fellabury Hill. I recollect the day you got me there, I was quite delighted with the prospect."

"But," said I, "they will be tired to death: why, my dear Cuthbert, the route you have given them is little less than nine miles."

"Well, my dear fellow," said Cuthbert, "what's that—nothing?"

"I think," said I, "if you had to walk nine miles, you would consider it something, Cuthbert."

"Ay," said my brother, "to walk, I grant you. I should as soon think of walking to Jerusalem, as Parson Whalley did in my father's time: but, for horses—and horses that have not too much work at any time—it is only wholesome exercise."

"Horses!" said I: "what horses have they got?"

"They have got the phaeton," said Cuthbert. "I told Hutton to tell the coachman to get it ready for them; and Kate drives, you know, remarkably well,—and the ponies are so quiet,—and she is so fond of driving,—not that I should let her drive horses that were not perfectly quiet. I'm sure since that day when I and my father were coming along the road by Shooter's Hill, where that place like Severndroog is built——"

"Yes," said I, interrupting somewhat more sharply than was my wont, seeing that I was both vexed and angry: "but, my dear Cuthbert, Harriet wanted the phaeton to go call on a Mrs. Somebody at Hallowden,—a remarkably pretty drive,—in which she meant to invite Mrs. Brandyball to accompany her;—she made a point of going to-day, and I concluded had ordered the carriage."

"No, sir," said Hutton, who was wheeling his master to the luncheon-table, "the carriage was not ordered when my master sent me to see about it. Mrs. Gurney sent down since, but then the young ladies were gone."

I could not trust myself with any remark, so I took the prudent course of leaving the room, and going in search of Harriet, whom I found in her boudoir, looking exactly as cheerful and unconcerned as if no liberty had been taken with her rights and privileges, and she had not been disappointed in her drive, and frustrated in her civil intentions towards both Mrs. Somerton and our volunteer guest.

"It was my fault, dear," said Harriet; "I forgot to order the phaeton after breakfast, and——"

"That may be, Harry," said I; "but what I complain of is, that any body here should forget to ask your leave before they ordered it."

"Oh, never mind," said Harriet. "The day is not so fine as it was, and perhaps it will rain, and perhaps I might

have caught cold; besides, the girls are so very fond of their schoolmistress, and it amuses her, and I can go another day."

"You are a dear, kind, good soul, Harriet," said I; "but you must not, and shall not, be overlooked and degraded in your own house. The carriage and horses are yours, and——"

"So they are, love," said Harriet; "but it was cousin Cuthbert who gave them to me. Recollect *that*, dear Gilbert; recollect how much we owe him."

"I do, Harriet dear," said I; "and, as far as I can judge, it is not likely that I shall very soon be permitted to forget it. However, a gift, to be valuable, or even receivable, must be complete; and the moment he presented you with that carriage, all his interest in, and control over it, ceased and determined."

"My dear Gilbert," said Harriet, "what you are now saying must be something you learned in the Temple, when they were going to make a lawyer of you. Never let us cherish an unkindly thought towards kind Cuthbert. I believe sometimes Kitty's pertness and Tom's rudeness flurried me a little. I feel angry and vexed at times,—angry that I am vexed, and vexed that I am angry. But all this is temporary; a few more days, and quiet will be restored."

"Where is Fanny?" said I.

"Why, Fanny has gone home," said Harriet. "Papa has sent for her; but he brings her back to dinner. I don't exactly know, but I rather think her visit to the Rectory has something to do with the affair of your friend, Lieutenant Merman. I don't know, because papa's note merely begs her to come home; but I cannot understand what else could have required her presence."

"I think," said I, "it is quite time something should be done decisively in that business. I admit that I never liked him since——"

"I remember the moment, right well," said Harriet: "it was when I was foolish and Missy enough to try and make you jealous of him,—wasn't that the time? and isn't that the cause of your disinclination from him? I know it is. But you have forgiven *me*."

"Yes, dear, yes," said I. "Forgiven you?—to be sure I have, and forgotten the whole affair,"—which, in truth, I had not, nor any one incident that ever occurred during my unconscious courtship of my darling wife.

It is curious how the minutest circumstances are registered in the mind, with which the object of our affections is

in any degree connected. I remember, as well as if it were but yesterday, while walking with Harriet and her father, and her little sister, in their gay and blooming garden, I gathered a beautiful half-budded rose. I placed it in the button-hole of my coat, and walked on, talking as we had been talking before; nor was it till my eyes rested for a moment on those of Harriet, that I felt a conviction of my selfishness, and a consciousness that she had expected I was gathering it for *her*, and that she had been disappointed when I appropriated it to myself. Now, absurd as it may seem, although I never have so far betrayed my weakness as to mention this trifling circumstance to her, I never, to this moment, think of it without regret and discontent.

"Come to luncheon, dear," said I. "Cuthbert is there, and I left him somewhat abruptly; for I was vexed.

"Gilbert, dearest," said Harriet, leaning on my arm, and looking in my face with an ingenuousness neither to be affected nor mistaken, "never, never be vexed about any thing in which I am concerned. Believe me, I am too happy to make your happiness; and as for all this matter, what does it signify whether I went to-day to make my visit, or go to-morrow? Promise me, dear love, to let nothing of this sort put you the least out of the way."

Could I help kissing her white forehead, and pressing her to my heart? I think I should have gone the length of kissing her rosy lips too, had not her maid come into the room at the moment, to say that Mr. Cuthbert had sent up word by Hutton that he and Mr. Sniggs were waiting for us. There it was again!—not even master of five minutes. Mr. Sniggs, indeed!

"Come, then, dear," said I to Harriet; and down stairs we went: and there we found the late antagonists making common cause in a servile war upon some grilled and minced fowl, Cuthbert having, under medical advice, fallen to, lest he should lose the appetite which the smell of the *diablerie* of my ingenious cook had excited. The sight of luncheon immediately brought to my mind the peculiar awkwardness of Mrs. Brandyball's appearance at the Rectory, with her two sparkling satellites, on a morning which, from what Harriet had told me, seemed to be "big with the fate of Merman and of Fan."

While I was helping dear Harriet to "the least bit of cold chicken in the world," the servant brought me a note. I opened and read it. Its contents were, to me, convincing that I had not mistaken my lieutenant. I threw it across

the table to Harriet, who ran her eyes over it, and returned it, saying only, "Well," which I myself have a habit of saying upon many occasions when it would not be well to say any thing more. The contents of the note were these lines:—

"DEAR SIR,—I regret that a compulsory visit to London this afternoon will prevent my having the pleasure of dining with you to-day, as I had proposed.

Yours, very truly,

"J. MERMEN."

"That's odd, Harry," said I, as I jerked off the wing of the chicken.

"Yes," said Harriet, "very odd indeed, considering."

"I am not sorry," said I, cutting her the thinnest imaginable slice of ham, "even if it be as I suppose from *this*."

"I am," replied my wife, "for *her* sake."

"It is for *her* sake," answered I, "that I am not."

"Is that an invitation?" said Cuthbert.

"No," said I; "on the contrary, a refusal of one."

"Oh!" continued he; "because I hear that some lady—I *did* hear her name, but, ah dear, I forget—is going to give a juvenile fancy ball, and I was going to ask if you knew her—Hutton can't tell me—because I think my little girls would—ah, would like to go, if they were invited?"

"There is to be a thing of the sort," said Sniggs, "at Mrs. Trigley's, I believe. Tall woman, in a green bonnet—sits opposite the churchwardens—amiable person—subject to jaundice—had a slight touch of epilepsy about four years since—nice house for the purpose—bad aspect—dampish—I take it—rather troubled with sciatica."

"And when is this to be?" said I.

"I think in about a fortnight," said Sniggs.

"We don't know her," said Harriet.

"I think," said Cuthbert, "Bessy Wells told Kate that the Wells's know her; and so I said, if she could manage it, she and Jane might go; and Kate *was* saying something of having a little thing of the sort here. I believe Mr. Kitington, the dancing-master, put it into her head first;—of course these people are anxious to show off their pupils to the best advantage."

I could not stand this, so I made no reply; but only said "Well" again, as Harriet had said before, and drank a glass of wine.

I saw Harriet looked worried and vexed at Merman's

note, which it was clear to me she considered the *avant courier* of some unpleasant family news. She was evidently engrossed with her own thoughts, and left us as soon as she possibly could.

There is something like prescience, something intuitively quick about women when matters connected with these *affaires de cœur* come under their notice. It might, to be sure, have been, in this instance, that Fanny had made her sister to a certain degree her confidante. What struck me was, that my reverend father-in-law had been drawing matters to a conclusion with the lieutenant, but having chosen the morning rather than the evening for the conference, the result had not been quite so successful as that of our winding-up conversation upon a probably similar topic.

Fanny returned to Ashmead between four and five o'clock, and hurried unseen to Harriet's sanctum, and when I saw my poor little wife again I saw she had been crying. She begged me to excuse her to Mrs. Brandyball for her absence from dinner, on the plea of indisposition—the fact being, that she and Fanny intended to devote the rest of the day to talk over the important events of the morning.

Mrs. Brandyball returned alone in the carriage—the independent Kate having accepted for herself and her sister an invitation from Bessy Wells to stay at the rectory and pass the evening, which could be perfectly well managed, and without any inconvenience, inasmuch as they could come home in the carriage which would be sent to fetch the rector, who was to dine with us.

Our fair guest was profuse in her expressions of admiration of the neighbourhood, of the rectory, of the Wells's, of my horses, of my phaeton, of Kitty's driving, and, in short, of every thing in any way connected with us; for it struck me that her great object was to "butter" Cuthbert, to whom she looked up as a patron at least; nor was I without some slight suspicion that in her disinterested remarks about his visit to the neighbourhood of her seminary, she even carried her intentions the whole length of succeeding to the maternal control of the young ladies by a nearer and dearer claim than that of their governess.

"Have you sent for Sniggs?" said Cuthbert to me.

"No—why?" asked I.

"I thought," said my brother—"I may be mistaken—but I thought you said Harriet was unwell. Wouldn't it be better—eh—to—don't you think—"

"Oh no," replied I; "her illness is not of a serious cha-



racter. I rather think she and her sister have something to talk over."

"We saw Miss Fanny at the rectory," said Mrs. Brandyball, "and Mr. Merman was there. I asked him if he were to be of our domestic circle here to-day; but he replied with an unusual degree of abruptness, that he was engaged elsewhere. Vanity makes men ridiculous—pride, odious. I know the lieutenant is a great favourite here; but his manner to-day was not so gracious as it is ordinarily wont to be."

"He has written to me," said I, "to tell me he has been obliged to go to London."

"Ah, poor man, I pity him," said the lady; the city for wealth, the country for health; and whatever allurements the society of the metropolis may display to the youthful mind, the calm repose of the umbrageous grove, overhanging the limpid stream, has in it a charm for delicate minds which is not to be found in busier scenes."

"You are quite right, ma'am," said Cuthbert; "what can be more delightful? I often get Hutton to wheel me down to the edge of our little river here, and make him throw bits of bread into the water, and there I sit sometimes by the hour together, watching the fish come and eat it. I used to fish myself; but a rod is such a heavy thing to hold, so I get Hutton sometimes to stand by me and fish for me; but he seldom catches any thing, which is perhaps all for the best; for the hook we know must hurt the fish; besides which, it is so much trouble to take it off, if one does catch one, and put a fresh bait on, that what is called good sport flurries me—and as for crowds—oh, dear! dear!—nobody *can* like a crowd except a pickpocket."

"How imaginative your brother's mind is!" said Mrs. Brandyball to me, looking quite seraphic. "I really believe that those who have resided in oriental climes catch, as it were, that inspiration which seems to imbue the poetry of those regions."

I made a sort of assenting noise; but quite aware of my inferiority, and looking upon Mrs. B. as a sort of petticoated Sir William Jones, did not venture to offer the slightest remark upon the authors to whom she alluded, and with whom she was of course intimately acquainted.

It seemed clear to me, however, that as the Lieutenant had bolted, and my two ladies intended dining by themselves, and Cuthbert's two ladies had betaken themselves to the Rectory, that Cuthbert, Wells, and I should have the pleasure

of Mrs. Brandyball's company all to ourselves, the which I did not very much dislike, inasmuch as Wells was just the man to draw her out, and thus afford me an opportunity of judging of her intellectual qualities, so that I might at some subsequent period discuss with Cuthbert the propriety or impropriety of keeping the girls at her school.

We parted to dress, and I of course visited my darling Harriet. As I suspected, the Lieutenant had behaved shabbily. Wells's sober arguments with respect to Fanny and his attachment had failed. The Reverend general—the church-militant—had been defeated. Merman had, if not money, expectations, and a maiden aunt, which maiden aunt had, it seems, some twenty thousand pounds, the bulk of which was to become the property of her nephew, provided he married a Miss Malony, who was her *protégée*. There were several very extraordinary rumours about the cause of the interest which this young person created in old Miss Merman's heart—none of which I shall set down, because the characters of cardinals and old maids are sacred, and nobody ought to say one word about them; however, it was altogether a mystery, into which it appeared the Lieutenant had only been recently admitted by the elder lady of the two.

The scene up-stairs was not agreeable; poor Fanny was crying. I believe she really had, under her papa's sanction, worked herself into a liking for the Lieutenant. I tried to like him as a friend—as an acquaintance even—but I never could achieve it, and I ventured to suggest the drying up of her tears; but women are such kind, tender, affectionate creatures, that my advice was wasted. What she ever saw in the man, I never could myself discover. However, he is gone. I am sorry for Fanny, but delighted as far as I am myself concerned.

Wells has just arrived—I hear the rustling of Mrs. Brandyball's roundabout silk gown in the gallery. So—in order to make myself particularly acceptable—down I go once more to receive my guests.

## CHAPTER V.

OUR dinner progressed, as the Americans say, most propitiously. Wells was in much better spirits than I had expected to find him, considering the recent severe frustration of all his well-laid schemes for Fanny's matrimonial promotion. He did not in the slightest degree allude to the circumstance, probably because my own case had not entirely slipped his memory, and because any recapitulation of the history of the lieutenant's wooing might have recalled to my recollection some scenes of a similar character to those which had been recently acted at the Rectory, but which had not been productive of a similar result.

Mrs. Brandyball, whose whole aim and object appeared to be the making every body round her pleased with themselves, as the readiest mode of making every body present pleased with *her*, began her course of experiments in that way by eulogizing, in her best set terms, the gallant officer now absent, as one of the most interesting of his sex.

"I protest," said she, "that I am not like that particular genus of gallinaceous birds whose tenderest sensibilities are awakened by the appearance of sanguineously-coloured cloth, but I cannot so entirely subdue the natural, and I hope not altogether reprehensible sentiment of gratitude which must unquestionably animate every female heart towards our gallant protectors in the time of peril."

"Ah," said Cuthbert, "yours is a very amiable weakness in that respect. What soldiers have to endure,—ah, those marchings and countermarchings,—eh?"

"But," continued Mrs. Brandyball, determined to win the Rector entirely, "I never met with an individual so entirely exempt from pretension or affectation as Lieutenant Merman. He appears to me to be unexceptionable."

"Well," said the reverend divine, "there must be tastes

of all sorts; for my part, I think him as empty a ceccomb as ever stepped——”

Mrs. Brandyball stared with astonishment.

“And I,” said I, “think him odious.”

Her eyes opened still wider.

“Ah,” said Cuthbert, “do you know I have never taken the trouble to think whether I like him or not?”

The manner in which our fair visiter was mystified was exceedingly amusing to us: it was evident, not only that she felt wonderfully disappointed by the way in which her eulogiums upon the lieutenant had been received, but that she set us down as two of the most hardened hypocrites that ever existed. What else could she think?—she had seen the man living constantly with us,—evincing beyond a shadow of doubt his devotion towards my sister-in-law, and received by her with a corresponding frankness of approval. Wells was in no humour to soften or qualify what he had said of him, and I thought I had found out enough of Mrs. Brandyball’s character to be certain that when she found that we completely threw him over, she would let him lie in the mire without any farther attempt at his exaltation.

Tom, who came in with the dessert, had been upstairs with Harriet and her sister, and, by the expression of his most expressive countenance, I was dreadfully apprehensive that he had picked enough out of their conversation to understand that the lieutenant had behaved somehow ungenteelly, and had received his *congé*. The imp looked cunning, and as, besides what he might have extracted from the dialogue of the sisters, he was extremely fond of collecting *facetix* from the servants’ hall, it seemed extremely likely that the real state of the case had oozed out during the afternoon, and that he might favour us with the *domestic* version of the “soger officer’s” inglorious retreat.

Cuthbert, whose consummate skill in the art of child-spoiling I have now watched with more attention than satisfaction, whenever the girls were away, bestowed all his favours upon their lout of a brother, and he had at this period expressed a wish, which came like a gentle command, that Tom should take, or seem to take, a great interest in every thing that was going on.

“Whenever you don’t understand any thing that is talked of, Tommy,” said my brother, “always ask me. It is by inquiring, every body learns. It will save you a great deal of trouble in the end.” And accordingly Tom felt bound to be unceasingly inquisitive, always, however, running poor Cuthbert eventually into a corner, and thus irri-

tating him as much as it was possible for him to be irritated by any thing. This questionable system of improvement of course destroyed any thing like rational or even connected conversation during the presence of the hopeful youth in the dining-room, and knowing how tiresome his company would be to Harriet and Fanny, I had not the courage to send him up to the boudoir, which, as his fair sisters were out, was the only place which could be appropriated to his use.

"I know no more of him personally," said Wells, speaking of some public man, "than I do of the Pope of Rome."

"Who is the Pope of Rome, uncle?" said Tom.

"My dear boy," said Cuthbert, "he is elected by the cardinals."

"What's a cardinal, uncle?"

"A cardinal, my love, is an ecclesiastical prince, and a member of the sacred college."

"Yes," said Wells, "and the Roman Catholics hold that, as the Pope represents Moses, so the cardinals represent the seventy elders."

"They wear red hats," said Mrs. Brandyball.

"Why do they wear red hats?" said Tom.

"For the same reason, Master Tommy," said Wells, "that millers wear white ones."

"What's that?" said Tom.

"To keep their heads warm," said Wells.

"How incalculably whimsical you are, Mr. Wells," said Mrs. Brandyball.

"Did you never hear of any great man who was called Pope, who never was a cardinal?" said Cuthbert, evidently determined to obtain some share of Mrs. Brandyball's favourable opinion.

"No," said Tom.

"Not Alexander Pope, the poet?" said Cuthbert, leading him dexterously to an affirmative.

"No: who was he?" said Tom.

"Why, Tommy," said Wells, bored to death by the boy's pertinacity, "he was once called a note of interrogation."

"What's a note of interrogation?" said Tom.

"What he was told he was himself, a little ugly thing that asks questions," said the rector.

"Oh, Mr. Wells," said Mrs. Brandyball, "that is too-severe. To *my* mind Pope was not much of a poet."

"To mine," said I, "he appears the greatest poet we ever had."

"Who is the best poet now, pappy," said Tom.

"Post, my dear, said Cuthbert; "never mind,—I don't know,—I'm sure,—there, now that will do, don't make a noise,—eat your orange."

"I perfectly agree with you, Mr. Gurney," said Mrs. Brandyball, "as to the utility of the system of exciting the development of the mental qualities by the institution of a principle of inquiry which must, while its results add fresh stores of information to the questioner, induce a constant desire for new acquirements."

Wells and I exchanged looks, for although it may seem most illiberal that we should encourage any doubts or suspicions with regard to the perfect ebriety of our fair guest, we could not fail to remark that the long words in which she dealt rather largely at this period, came out rather indistinctly; however, Wells replenished her glass with port wine, which she that day drank, because she said, "the cadent humidity" (*Anglice*, some rain which had fallen during the afternoon) "had imparted an ageish character to the circumambient atmosphere."

My position was an awkward one; whenever she evinced a disposition to retire, her destination would be the drawing-room, with no companion save Tom; I therefore did not feel in the slightest degree desirous of unsettling her; nor dare I venture to pay my poor wife a visit, lest the movement should flurry our fair visiter. I knew that in the present state of their minds her joining Harriet and Fanny would be beyond description disagreeable, so I affected to be exceedingly snug and comfortable; and Wells seconding my efforts to keep the little party together, the lady gradually warming by the generous influence of what, in the earlier part of the day, she would probably have called the "vinous juice," began proportionably to relinquish all her fine words and euphonic phrases, until at length her natural candour led her not only to talk like other people, but to give us some curious particulars of her own "life, character, and behaviour," to which I must say the Rector more ingeniously than ingenuously led and encouraged her.

"Little pitchers have great ears," said Mrs. Brandyball; "Master Tom had better go to his aunty,—as for *my* part, I can only say that in France the ladies never leave the table until the gentlemen go."

"Or rather," interrupted Wells, "the gentlemen always go when the ladies leave the table."

"It's the same thing in the end," said Mrs. Brandyball; "now what I mean to say is this,—Mrs. Gurney is unwell, and, I dare say, would be better pleased with my room than

my company. Indeed, between you and me and the post, I don't think I am overmuch of a favourite with her at any time; and so—as I feel agueish—although the port wine has done me a great deal of good, I don't want to stir from where I am till tea-time: we are very snug where we are—only, to be sure, you may have something to talk about—parish, as we say,—in which case I'm off—a nod's as good as a wink to a blind horse.”

“But you are not a blind orse,” said Tom, looking at her with a perfect consciousness that the expression of her countenance, and the character of her conversation, had undergone a very decided alteration.

“No, Master Tom,” said the lady, “that's very true.”

“No,” said Tom; “no more than hi ham a little pitcher; hi'm hup to you, stoopid as you may fancy me.”

“Tommy, love,” said Cuthbert, “don't speak in that manner to Mrs. Brandyball: what would your sisters say if they heard you?”

“Say!” said Tom; “why, they'd laugh like fun, specially Kitty; she would tell me to go it like winkin.”

Here the lady telegraphed to me her desire that Tom should be missing as soon as possible; and while she was occupied in this operation, Wells again replenished her glass, having ascertained that she had arrived at an amiable state of oblivious mystification, in which, although she gave some slight evidence of surprise at finding her goblet, like the Panmure punch-bowl, always full, she could not exactly recollect having previously emptied it.

This tampering with her weakness, and ministering to her failings, might have been, by the more rigid, considered, what is colloquially called, “taking an unfair advantage,” and I think even I, in my own house, or, what was so called and considered in the neighbourhood, should have interposed to prevent the proceeding, had it not been that I felt I was doing Cuthbert and his daughters-in-law an essential service in contributing to rub off the plating, of which I have before written, which he mistook for precious metal, and by allowing his favourite the full indulgence in what Kitty had more than once hinted was, when she was at home, her

“Custom always of the afternoon,”

permit her to exhibit herself in her natural colours. I confess the signal success which had crowned the early part of the process, and the suddenness with which the mask had

been abandoned, rather induced me to sanction its continuance so long as the lady continued "nothing loath;" and so long as no undue influence was exercised over her to induce her to exceed her usual limits.

I answered her signal, and was obliged after all to desire Tom to go and get his tea with Harriet and Fanny, although it was extremely disagreeable to do what I knew would, to a certainty, make them particularly unhappy.

"I'm off," said Tom: "hi knows what's what. She's a-going to let out some of her rum stories,—and his afraid that I should ear um."

"Tom, my boy, go when your uncle tells you," said Cuthbert.

"Oh, nobody wants to stop," said Tom: "I likes to go to Haunt Fan a precious sight better than staying here."

And out he went, banging the door after him, whistling as he crossed the hall, and forthwith stumped up stairs, to torment the consulting sisters.

"He's a nice boy," said Mrs. Brandyball, "only, as I said,

'Children pick up words, as pigeons peas,  
And utter them again as God shall please.'

And something might be said about somebody that might as well go no farther; as I say, 'prevention is better than cure,' and I hate tattling."

"You are perfectly right," said Wells, with a look of the profoundest respect, and in a manner so horribly deferential, that I had nearly burst into a fit of laughing, although I was in fact in no very mirthful humour.

"Why, la, Mr. Wells," continued the lady, who having freed herself from the restraint imposed by Tom's presence, went off at score; "you must naturally think I know a good deal of the world at my time of life; and so having seen what I have seen in it, my proverb is, 'the least said, soonest mended.'"

Yes, thought I, and I suspect your temporary forgetfulness of so excellent a maxim at the present moment is likely to produce some curious results; for I saw Cuthbert every now and then elevate his eyebrows, in a manner for him most actively expressive of astonishment at what he heard.

"Why," said the lady, "now I'll tell you; you know those two girls of yours are as fond of me as if I was their own mother. That's mere nature—all nature—every bit of it nature; they never knew their own mother,—then isn't it natural they should love me?—I have always been kind to



them, and, as Mr. Gurney knows, never said wrong was the thing they did, though Kitty's as full of mischief as an egg's full of meat:—well then—I—so—oh, what was I saying—something——”

“You were speaking of the natural affection of children for their parents,” said Wells, who performed his part in this domestic farce with the greatest gravity.

“So I was,” said the lady; “and—I had no mother myself!”

“What! never, ma'am?” said Wells, with a look of the most serious astonishment.

“Oh, Mr. Wells,” said Mrs. Brandyball, “what a man you are! you do remind me so of an uncle of mine at Bristol.”

“Oh,” said Wells, “then you *had* an uncle?”

“Two,” said the lady; “and, as you asked, I had a mother, but she died before I knew any thing about her, and that's a very bad thing for a girl.”

“It is indeed,” said Outhbert,

“——Sighing like furnace.”

“And so,” continued she, “I was left a good deal to myself; and that was, I think, the foundation of all my knowledge. I was what they would call a self-taught genius. I never was taught nothing on earth my nobody until after I was married, and then poor Mr. B., who was mighty particular,—he was a very old man when I married him—at least I thought so then,—I don't believe he was near so old as Mr. Gurney, but he was a deal too old to marry *me*,—so when I came out with my P's and Q's—all wrong, you know—he used to fidget, and look cross,—and so then I had masters and mistresses,—and got on uncommonly well,—and never having any family—none of what the advertising servants call incumbrances—I had plenty of time to devote to myself, and so—as—I say—learning is a treasure—I—then—poor Mr. B. died—he was in a very extensive way of business—in the timber trade—but somehow—I don't recollect the particulars—when he died, it was found—I never could understand why—that he had not left me a farden—no, Mr. Wells, as I'm a living woman, not the value of a brass farden—nothing settled on me;—and there I was—nobody to help me—my uncle dead—and my father gone abroad for life.”

“What a dreadful position for a female,” said Cuthbert, who, in the tenderness of his heart, and the intensity of his

sympathy in our fair friend's misfortunes, totally lost sight of the main points of her history, so candidly—so unconsciously narrated for our edification.

"And what *did* happen to you?" said Wells.

"Oh," said Mrs. Brandyball, "nothing happened to me: I began to think what I had best do—and what was easiest to be done; and just as I was quite at a nonplus, I happened to fall in with a nice respectable lady who kept the school I now keep."

"Who wore that day the arms which now I wear?"

said I, involuntarily.

"No, not arms," said the lady—"school,—oh, I remember—out of the play—Norval—ha! ha!—'On the Grampy Hills,'—that's a very moving play—it always makes me cry to think of his poor dear mother."

"My dear Gilbert," said Wells, "you have interrupted Mrs. Brandyball in her autobiography."

"Oh, there's not much to tell," said the lady; "only my new friend Mrs. Slinkin wanted an assistant to teach French, Italian, music, geography, and astronomy, and a few other little matters, and so I engaged myself—her great objection was to my name—which, she said, gave a notion that I was—ha! ha!—the idea—addicted to the use of spirits—but, as I said, what's in a name?—there's Mr. Young, very old—Mrs. White, very brown—Mr. Short, very tall—and Mrs. Little, very big,—and why should not Mrs. Brandyball be as sober as a judge?"\*

"Why not, indeed!" said Wells, once more filling up her glass; "and so, I conclude, you satisfied your friend?"

"Quite entirely," said Mrs. Brandyball: "so I took the situation, and we got on very comfortably: indeed, the best part of the story is, I didn't know any of the things I went to teach,—that is to say I knew a little of them; but what I said was this, I shall learn them all in time, by teaching the girls,—and so I did—and so then Mrs. Slinkin made friends with a Bath doctor,—and he used to recommend Montpelier House as the healthiest place in the neighbourhood,—and so people sent their children to us,—and then we sent out one or two to India,—and so made a connexion that way,—

\* At the period of which Mr. Gilbert Gurney's papers treat, James Smith's admirable song upon the subject of similar anomalies had not appeared.

and at last Mrs. Slinkin married the doctor, and I stepped into the business; and now, I'll venture to say, there isn't a better conducted school in all England, Ireland, and Scotland, or Berwick-upon-Tweed."

Whereupon, to my infinite amazement, I beheld my brother Cuthbert elevate himself to an angle of forty-five, and say, in the sweetest imaginable tone.

"To *that* I think I can myself bear testimony. Ha!"

This announcement evidently started Wells as much as it had surprised me. However, it encouraged the lady to a fuller confession, which, to me and the Rector, was extremely amusing.

"Now," said she, "you see me as I am; and I have told you all my history, but I should never have opened my lips as I have done this evening if the girls had been here."

I knew, by the expression of Wells's countenance that he was dying to ask her whether, when she talked of opening her lips in the manner she had done this evening, she meant for the purposes of oratory or imbibition.

"Every body is obliged," said she, "to play a part in this world, that's what I mean to say;—what's a judge off the bench, wig and gown aside?—just like other men, to be sure; but while he is in his court, he must act judge, and nothing else,—the same with me:—why, if I was to be natural, as folks call it, and say my say as I like to say it, I should be thought no more of than one of my own housemaids,—recollect the story of the King and the Schoolmaster?—to be sure you do. Well, I make the girls believe their governess the very pink of perfection,—never hear me talk what I call plain kitchen English, no, no."

"Well," said I, "for my part, I prefer the simplest language that can be used; and I am sure you will forgive me for saying that I have never enjoyed any evening since your arrival here so much as this."

"That's it," said the joyous matron, "I know *that*—now, at home, when the girls are gone to bed—early hours are healthy, not one of 'em up at half-past eight—I see no harm in having in a neighbour or two and enjoying a quiet rubber of whist or a pool at loo—limited, you know. Well, as I say, there's no immorality in playing cards; yet I should not like my girls to catch me at it. Then, after our cards, we have a bit of supper, seldom any thing hot, for the girls could smell *that*; and, as I always tell them that suppers are unwholesome, and never allow them a morsel at night, I should not like them to know that I eat supper myself.

Well, and then, as I say, what's the harm of a glass of something warm after one's snack?"

"Why," said I, "Kitty told us your principle upon that subject, and even referred to your practice."

"Ah!" said the lady, "my Kitty is an exception to the general rule,—she is *the* favourite."

"Thank you, thank you, a thousand times, Mrs. Brandyball," said Cuthbert, nodding his head approvingly like a china mandarin, "I'm sure of that."

"I call her one of my pattern-girls, sir," said the lady.

"I trust," said Cuthbert, "my dear Mrs. B., you do not over-fatigue them?"

"You know, my dear sir," said the lady, "I do not. I'll tell you my course. Up at eight,—prayers, always read by Miss Julietta Timmins, whose grandmother was aunt to the curate of Cripplesdon,—fine voice, sweet delivery, and as slow as a slug,—breakfast at nine,—no nonsense about nerves,—never let them touch tea,—pure milk-and-water,—the cow and the pump,—out for an hour,—relaxation in the shrubbery,—at ten in school,—every thing parcelled out,—method is the only mode of managing the mind,—seven minutes and a half for geography,—ditto for knotting hearth-rugs,—a quarter of an hour for French,—ten minutes for astronomy,—ditto for the use of the globes,—a quarter of an hour for Italian,—and twenty minutes for mathematics. Then to learn lessons,—dinner at two."

"Very pretty proceedings," said Cuthbert. "A little of every thing, and not too much of any thing."

"Exactly so," said Mrs. Brandyball. "Then, till half-past three, the play-ground,—in again,—fifteen minutes for music,—six minutes for algebra,—nine minutes for drawing,—a quarter of an hour for English history,—six minutes for hydraulics, under the inspection of Doctor O., and nine minutes and a half for ethics and moral philosophy,—guitar twenty minutes (for those who learn it.)—Newton's *Principia* and dancing an hour and a half,—the play-ground again."

"But," said Wells, "do you never parade them?"

"Do what?" said Mrs. Brandyball.

"Take them out to walk?" said the rector. Never," exclaimed the agreeable hedgehog, "except to church," bowing complacently, in order to evince her high respect for the establishment. "No, no, Mr. Wells. I keep my charges all snug within brick walls tipped with broken bottles. There are but two windows that overlook my gar-

den, and that only in the winter,—planted them out,—no peeping into Montpelier.”

“But,” said I, “do you never walk out with them?”

“No,” said Mrs. Brandyball; “I am rather too heavy for exercise, and I can’t well trust the teachers. I have,” added she, putting her finger to her nose, “I *have* been a teacher myself; besides, if I did take them,—it’s as bad. I say to them, ‘Girls, as you go to church, look at nobody,—neither to the right nor to the left—keep your eyes on the ground, my dears;’ and so they do: and when they are at church, the front of the pew is so high, and the seat so low, that they can’t even get a peep at the parson.”

“That is severe over-much,” said Wells.

“Severe!” said Mrs. Brandyball. “You are a man of the world, Mr. W. Suppose I *did* parade them, as you call it, they would look about; and only think the things they are likely to see in the streets and the roads. If I walked in front, how should I know what they were doing behind my back? If I walked behind them and came last, where’s the use?—with poke bonnets on, how can I know what they are doing with their eyes? No, no; I keep them all snug at home, and then the dear loves have nothing to put bad notions into their young heads.”

“Very proper, indeed!” said Cuthbert.

“Very,” said I, looking at Wells, and thinking of Miss Falwasser as a pattern Miss of Montpelier.

“Now, Mrs. Brandyball,” said Wells, “allow me to help you to some more wine.” A permission he requested, because she had happened to remove her glass out of his reach.

“Oh no,” said she, “no more; ‘enough is as good as a feast;’ moderation is one of the greatest virtues.”

“We will order coffee then,” said I, “and have it here; and I will just step up to Harriet and see how she is.”

“Give my best regards,” said Mrs. Brandyball, “and say if she wishes to see me I shall be too happy to go and sit with her and Miss Wells.”

“I will,” said I; and giving directions to the servant to bring the coffee and tea, hastened to the two ladies to hear what they had been doing, and report progress with regard to ourselves.

The difference between the appearance of the room I had left; and that of the boudoir which I entered, was very striking. The noisy mirth and chatter of Mrs. Brandyball, the insidious officiousness of Wells, the supine indifference

of Cuthbert, the blaze of lamps, and the fumes of wine, were strongly contrasted by the calm serenity of Harriet's sanctum, and the subdued tone of the conversation in which she and her sister were engaged. On the table was a box—open—which contained numerous letters, and I thought a miniature picture. The box, however, was closed the moment I entered, and Harriet's first question was, what we had done with the lady?

"She preferred staying where she was," said I, "to becoming the sole tenant of the drawing-room; and so I have just ordered coffee, in the dinner-room, and snatched a minute to get to you. What have you done with the amiable Tom?"

"He went to bed soon after nine," said Fanny.

"After nine?" said I; "why, what o'clock is it now?"

"Considerably past ten," said Harriet.

"I had no idea of such a thing," said I.

"Time flies in agreeable society," replied Harriet.

"I must not stop," said I, "to tell you how our time *has* been passed; but we have had a scene——"

"For which," said my wife, "if Master Tom is to be believed, I am pretty well prepared. He came up evidently in a passion with the lady, and has been amusing us with histories of her proceedings, derived from his sister Jane, which, if true, or near the truth, ought to be communicated to Cuthbert."

"All would be unavailing," said I. "After having heard from her own mouth quite sufficient to render any other evidence against her unnecessary, he has just now pronounced the highest eulogium upon her, and declared his unqualified approbation of her establishment. I shall return to them, and, as soon as the carriage comes for your father, and brings home the 'darlings,' dispose of the party forthwith."

"How is papa?" said Fanny; "is he in good spirits?"

"Much as usual," said I; "he seemed a little out of sorts at first, but he soon recovered his usual good temper, and has played off our visiter to the greatest possible advantage. However, adieu for the present; I think half-an-hour will terminate our sitting."

And down I came, not without having, by way of reply to Harriet's "Don't be long, love," given her one affectionate kiss, which, I could not help fancying, made poor Fanny think of the absent lieutenant, about whom and his proceedings I admit I became rather anxious to know something more.

When I returned to the dinner-room, I found that its occupants had discovered the "time of night," and that Wells was beginning to wonder why the carriage had not arrived which was to bring back Cuthbert's living treasures, and bear away the excellent rector himself. However, coffee and tea were disposed of, and Mrs. Brandyball had, in a great degree, recovered her composure, and begun to resume her figurative style of conversation, before any announcement of its approach was made; and Cuthbert, who could not have rested unless he had seen the dear girls before he went to bed, seemed disposed, late as it was, to make up his rubber, which, amidst the interest he took in Mrs. Brandyball's autobiography, had slipped out of his mind, when, to my great relief,—for I longed to get up to Harriet, who was looking ill and wearied,—I heard the welcome wheels rolling towards the door.

The ringing of bells and barking of dogs soon confirmed my best anticipations, and Cuthbert's eyes twinkled with delight as he cast them expectingly on the door, so soon to be opened to give to his sight the pattern-girl of Montpelier, Miss Falwasser. The door was not opened, the dogs ceased to bark—and every thing resumed its wonted quietude, which remained for two or three minutes unbroken, when at length Hutton made his appearance, and, approaching the Rector, said—

"Mrs. Wells sends her love, sir; the young ladies were not quite ready to go home, and so she has sent the carriage for you, which can bring them back after you have done with it."

Wells looked more surprised than pleased, and said, "Hem! oh!"

"Young rogues," said Cuthbert, "dancing, I have no doubt."

"Most likely," said Mrs. Brandyball; "their Terpsichorean predilections are peculiarly potent."

This resumption of "style" took place because Cuthbert's servant was in the room, and it became essential, according to her policy, to "act her part" before even the meanest audience.

"Well, then," said Wells, "I suppose, being sent for, I must go. May I step up and say good night to the girls?"

"To be sure," said I.

"Good night, Mrs. Brandyball," said the rector, "I will take care and send back the rose-buds safe."

"Are your horses quite quiet?" said Cuthbert.

"Steady as rocks," said the rector.

"Because," said Cuthbert, "I am always alarmed about horses since an accident which had very nearly proved fatal to my poor father and myself, many years ago. We were travelling along the road——"

"Yes, I know," said Wells, "Severndroog."

"Oh!" said my brother, "I have told you—eh? I did not recollect—dear, dear! Hutton, just lift me up—there—that will do. Don't go before we have a bit of supper. Mrs. Brandyball says she takes a bit of something cold."

"Oh, not for *me*," said the lady, "if nobody else—I——"

"Tell them to bring the tray," said I to Hutton, in a fit of desperation, covered, as much as possible, by a look of the most perfect amenity.

"I'm off," said Wells, "good night—good night to both—to all." Saying which he proceeded to bid adieu to his daughters, and I suppose in some degree to ascertain the state of Fanny's feelings after the events of the morning.

The conversation began to flag—the lady had sunk into a sort of repose closely assimilating to that of Cuthbert; and I really was not enough of a hypocrite to appear pleased or even comfortable. Cuthbert was wheeled to his room to be refreshed with eau de Cologne, and Mrs. Brandyball just stepped up to her room to fetch her pocket-handkerchief.

The lady returned, Cuthbert was re-wheeled to his sofa, the sofa was wheeled to the table, which we drew round, and really it was with difficulty I did the honours. The *haut en bas* manner in which the girls treated us all, and regardless of all the commonest observances of the rules of society, usurped the carriages and conveniences of every body, not only in the house but in the neighbourhood, were unbearable; and now, at a moment when the mistress of that house was ill—if not in body, certainly in mind, and was anxious to get to rest early—here was I forced to remain at my post, helping and serving, while I knew, let the superficial appearances be what they might, that the young ladies who were disturbing all my family arrangements at Ashmead, could not fail of being, under the circumstances, equally unwelcome guests at the Rectory.

But even this was light compared with what I had to undergo afterwards. At about half-past eleven—I having heard Harriet's bell ring for her maid twenty minutes before—Mrs. Brandyball perceived through the mist that I was rather uncomfortable, and so she requested me to ring for her maid and her candle, which I most readily did—she beginning, I presume, to think that the sylphs were carrying the joke rather too far, and resolving, as far as she was



concerned, to get out of the adventure which had originated in her leaving them at Wells's. Away she went. We wished her good night, Cuthbert shook her hand, and they parted affectionately; and when she was gone I imagined that Cuthbert would be satisfied with recommending the girls to the care of their *soubrette*, or sending by her or Hutton, who was equally careful of the young charges, some kind message, and so betake himself to rest—but not a bit of it.

"Now, Gilbert," said he, "just do me the favour to push that little table near the sofa—make me one glass of white wine negus—none of your—oh dear me! how my back aches!—none of your Sangaree Sangrorum—like the West Indians—which I have heard folks talk of—ah!—and we will have a quiet bit of chat till the children come home—I cannot go to bed till I have seen Kitty—and—then—we have had no whist—ah!—Sniggs hasn't been here—no—nothing of that sort—and when Kitty tells us of all that has happened—and tho—ah!—the party—she is such a capital mimic."

I did as I was desired—or, as I felt it,—commanded—and then concocted a tumbler of a similar mixture for myself—the fire grew dull—the room grew cold—I could hear the ticking of the clock in the hall.

"Gilbert," said my brother, "that's a dear woman—the schoolmistress—ah!—"

A gentle tap at the door interrupted my answer.

"Come in," said I.

"It's only me, sir," said Foxcroft, my wife's maid.

"Do you want *me*," said I, hourly anticipating the event which was so materially to add to my respectability.

"No, sir," said Foxcroft, "only my mistress says, as you mayn't come up stairs till late, if you would recollect that she wishes to have the carriage to-morrow about twelve."

"Certainly," said I, "I'll remember to order it."

And then she shut the door, and I returned to the side of Cuthbert, cut to the heart that poor Harriet, without meaning the slightest reproach, should have sent me a quiet humble message to order her own carriage, in order to preserve it from a seizure on the part of those—I will not designate them—who were now keeping me out of my bed to await their return from a place where they had no business to be, to hear the praises of her who had no business to leave them there.

The candles, by which Cuthbert occasionally fancied he read, were already in the sockets—the lamp was glimmering and flickering with a sort of sputtering noise, the cer-

tain *avant-courier* of the most unsavoury of smells—still hardly able to keep his eyes open, my poor brother went on, muttering praises of the regularity and good order of the Montpelier establishment; while I, listening with the most earnest attention for the approach of the carriage, watched almost unconsciously the fast-fading fire in the grate. I began to get exceedingly chilly—the lamp gave stronger evidence of its proposed departure, and I was driven to the necessity of lighting my bed-room candle, to escape the darkness with which we were threatened. Having done which, I despatched the lamp somewhat upon the principle of the butcher's wife, who called to her husband to come and kill a sick sheep before it died.

Twang went the clock; one—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight—nine—ten—eleven—TWELVE.

"It is twelve o'clock," said I.

"What little rakes those girls are!" said Cuthbert; "I hope they won't tire themselves—poor dears! I dare say they are dancing—their sainted mother was very fond of reels—but—ah!—well—it is what we must all come to—poor Tom!—by the way, he didn't come in to wish us good night."

"He stayed with Harriet and Fanny," said I.

"It is getting coldish," said Cuthbert; "stir the fire, Gilbert—hadn't you better ring for some coals?"

"Why," said I, obeying orders, "I suppose they cannot be much longer—midnight is late for the rectory."

"I conclude Harriet is gone to bed," said Cuthbert, in a tone of voice which satisfied me that he would have been more interested in the fact of his own favourite cat having been made up for the night in her well-lined basket.

"Oh yes," said I, "two hours since, I should think—she is not by any means well." And then I thought of her "Come soon, love," which seemed to ring in my ears to a popular air, which then I fancied I traced in the ticking of the clock.

"Yaah," said Cuthbert, "I'm getting sleepy myself."

"Hadn't you better go to bed?" said I.

"No, no," replied my brother, "not till I have bid Kitty good-night."

He then relapsed into silence, and to say truth, I felt no inclination to disturb the tranquillity of the scene. A quarter after twelve—half past twelve came; at which period I was about to suggest that something extraordinary must have happened, but suddenly checked myself, when I recol-

lected that if Cuthbert's thoughts had been directed to the possibility of an accident, he would, with the fear of Blackheath before his eyes, have ordered out every man, woman, and child of the family, in search of his babes in the wood; so I waited, and, like the turnspit who, in the Spanish proverb, is made to console himself during his work on the culinary treadmill, with the certainty that "the largest leg of mutton must get done in time," sat to listen for the ladies, and think of my wife.

At length, just as I pictured Harriet buried in the happy depth of her first sleep, up drove the carriage. The footman, no doubt irritated by being kept up unusually late, and turned out for a second time, long after midnight, rang the house-bell with a force and power which made it reverberate through the hall and staircase loudly enough to have waked the dead. This set the three dogs barking all in different keys. Hutton and the footman hurried to let in the revellers, upsetting one of the hall chairs in their haste; all of which disturbance was followed by the loudest possible banging down of the carriage steps, immediately under my wife's window; the uproar only concluding after the carriage-door first, and the house-door next, had been also banged to and fastened—the former accompanied by the imprecations of Wells's servant outside the house, and the latter by the inevitable rattling of chains and scraping of bolts within.

"Well, dearest," said Cuthbert, "you have made it late—have you been very happy?"

"Yes, pappy," said Kitty, "very. Oh, you mustn't look at me—I'm such a figure! danced every bit of curl out of my hair! I couldn't get away before—it was all Bessy's doing—her pa went to bed the minute he came back, but Master Buggins and his cousin Harry *would* have two more dances, and after *that*, we had three of the new-fashioned things they call waltzes—Oh pappy, it was so nice, and made me so giddy, and so pleased, you can't think!"\*

"And how were *you* entertained, Jenny?" said I, standing, candle in hand, prepared for a start.

"I liked it very well, thank you, Uncle," said Jane, who looked as white as a sheet, with a pair of eyes as red as a ferret's.

\* It was just about the period at which Mr. Gurney wrote this portion of his papers that this irritating indecency, which has since been so universally adopted, was first introduced into English society.

"Gilbert," said Cuthbert to me, "what do you think this young lady has been whispering to me?"

"That she wants her maid, I suppose," said I.

"No," said Cuthbert, "something else—she says she should like a little bit of something to eat."

"Eat!" said I.

"Yes, uncle," said Kate; "we had only some lemonade and cakes, and that was at about half-past nine, and we dined at two with Bessy, so ——"

"Come, come," said Cuthbert, "ring the bell, Kitty, love, and we'll get you some cold fowl, or something of that sort,—you would not like any thing warm?"

"I am afraid," said I, "they are not likely to get any thing warm. I surmise that Mrs. Habijam (so was my cook named) is fast asleep."

Hutton made his appearance to answer the bell, for, as he must inevitably sit up to undress his master, and put him to bed, he had relieved my butler.

"Hutton," said Cuthbert, "these young ladies want something to eat."

"Very well, sir," said Hutton, in a tone which sounded like—very ill, sir.

"Any thing, Hutton," said Kate; "a bit of cold fowl and some tongue—nothing sweet."

"I'll go and see, miss," said Hutton.

As I foresaw that Hutton, in order to put the young lady's commands into execution, must necessarily call up Mrs. Habijam, who, although my cook, acted also as house-keeper, in order to get at the larder, and that my wearied butler must be "rousted out," to get at the wine, or whatever other liquid the sylphs might select for their regale; and as I beheld Hutton, by way of a preliminary, return to the room with a pair of fresh candles, and feeling that, as my presence was, even if agreeable to the trio, by no means essential to their enjoyments, I ventured to take the liberty of saying that, as it was growing late, and I had an engagement early in the morning I would wish them good night.

To my proposal I found not the slightest objection made by any one of the company; and accordingly, having shaken hands with my brother, and having been kissed boisterously by Kate, and gently by Jane, I betook myself to my room, where I found poor Harriet sitting up in her bed, wondering at the noise in the house at so late an hour, and fancying ten thousand things had happened, about which she had no opportunity of inquiring.

I will not describe my feelings, because they are not purely fraternal. The conclusion of the affair, however, was not the least annoying part of it, for it was certainly past two before Kate and her sister came dancing up stairs to their room, singing one of the airs to which they had been whisked about by Master Buggins and his cousin Henry, so loudly as to wake poor Harriet from the second sleep into which she had happily fallen.

What seemed so particularly odd in the whole of this business was, that the day on which so disagreeable an event had occurred in Wells's family should have been fixed upon for what really was an unusual gaiety there. I found, however, that the little party had been arranged before the *dénouement* of the Merman affair, and while he was yet in the house; and that Mrs. Wells, with the proper spirit of her sex, resolved that the dismissal of the lieutenant, which would be of course the talk of the whole place in a day or two, should not appear in any degree to have affected them, or made the slightest alteration in their arrangements.

I remember seeing once at a country fair a boy of about ten years of age, in a scarlet jacket much tinselled, a pair of dirty white trousers, with flesh-coloured stockings pulled up over them, his hair being flaxen, and matted, and his face dirty and painted, performing a hornpipe in front of a booth, a minute after his father had given him a most savage horse-whipping for some conduct, I suppose, militating against the laws and customs of the modern Thespians, the effect of which was very remarkable. The poor child was crying with pain, the tears running down his well-ochred cheeks, dancing as hard as he could, accompanied by periodical exclamations by his respectable parent of, "Jump, you dog,—go along, sir,—higher, sir," which overtopped the sound of the one fiddle upon which the child's eldest well-spangled sister was playing the tune.

The effect was at once ludicrous and painful, and somehow I could not help associating it in my mind with Mrs. Wells's uncommonly lively little party in the evening of the day of the defeat of all their well-laid schemes of settlement for Fanny.—However, I got to sleep at last; but little did I anticipate what was in store for me before I should sleep another night.

## CHAPTER VI.

**THERE** is a certain point to which complacency and forbearance may go, but there is also a certain point at which they must infallibly stop; and when I awoke in the morning, and thought over the events of the preceding evening, and moreover found my poor Harriet extremely unwell, I fell to considering what course I could adopt to rescue her and myself from the unbearable thralldom in which we found ourselves, without offending Cuthbert, or, on the other hand, of evincing a proper sense of gratitude for the kindnesses he had lavished upon us.

I was perfectly satisfied of his entire unconsciousness that he was doing any thing either to distress or inconvenience us; he felt convinced that we *must* like what *he* liked, or perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say, that he did not trouble himself to think much upon the subject. By this I do not mean that he was indifferent to our comfort or happiness, but that seeing the readiness with which all his wishes were complied with, and hearing neither remonstrance nor complaint, he was not aware that he was, in point of fact, making us positively miserable.

As the morning wore on, however, I began to think that my mind was likely to be occupied with even more important matters. Harriet's indisposition increased, and I was informed about seven o'clock by the proper authorities that it would be advisable to call in medical aid. I immediately went to Harriet to inquire whether her disinclination to Sniggs continued as strong as ever, and in reply was referred to her mother, for whom she had sent.

I knew exactly what the result of this reference would be. The prejudice entertained by Mrs. Wells against the unfortunate son of Galen, however natural, was unconquerably strong; and as the tone of Harriet's voice convinced me that in submitting the subject to her fond parent she

would say nothing likely to remove or mitigate it, I determined at once to send off a servant to Dr. Downey, a lady's doctor of considerable reputation and extensive practice, who lived within a very short distance of Winchester. Time it seemed would not allow of my sending to London for a Sir Charles or a Sir John, as I had, with a view to soothing poor Sniggs's feelings, originally intended. I was, therefore, compelled to run the risk of offending him, hoping, however, in some degree to qualify what I knew would be considered a grievance, by getting leave to join him in the commission with the Doctor, who, in addition to his eminent professional qualities, was the very pink of politeness, and a universal favourite.

Finding that the proposed arrangement was agreeable to Harriet, I forthwith wrote to the Doctor and sent off my letter, and had the satisfaction of finding upon Mrs. Wells's arrival that what I had done met with her entire approbation. From the moment, however, that the Doctor was sent for and my respected mother-in-law proceeded to her daughter's room, I felt—certainly as I had never felt before—my anxiety had commenced—my worry had begun. I dreaded lest the Doctor should come too late—that some unforeseen accident might befall my beloved Harriet—I felt, in short, as if I had suddenly become a useless and superfluous member of my own family; I walked about the hall, went into one room, and then into another—stopped—listened—then sat down; until at length I resolved upon going into the grounds, and made a sort of business of looking at the celery and sea-kale in the kitchen garden. The kale covers might have been bee-hives, the celery trenches an asparagus-bed for all I cared, and into the house I came again, when to my horror I heard a sound certainly most unexpected by me at such a moment: that of the tuning of a fiddle in the drawing-room next to my wife's bed-chamber. I hurried up-stairs astounded at such a circumstance, and there beheld Mr. Kittington, the dancing-master, just in the act of beginning the then popular country-dance of the "Opera Hat," that being fixed upon for the first practice of the before-breakfast lesson to the young ladies.

When I entered the room the two pets, dressed with remarkably short petticoats and dirty white kid shoes, sprang forward to welcome me, and expected, I conclude, to see me look remarkably well pleased.

"My dear girls," said I, "you cannot take your lesson here, nor, as I think, any where else this morning; Mrs. Gurney is extremely ill, and the noise will distract her."

"Ill," said Jane, "what's the matter with her, uncle?"

"Jane," said Kitty, "how *can* you be so foolish—she is not *very* ill, uncle!"

"Indeed she is," said I.

"And so is Tom," said Jane, "he is all out in a rash, and can't see out of his eyes. Pappy is not up yet, but I'll tell him as soon as I can."

"Indeed!" said I, wondering at the sort of mind in which my Harriet and Mrs. Falwasser's Tom could be by any means associated.

During this little colloquy, Mr. Kittington, in stockinet pantaloons and pumps—time half-past eight in the morning—stood fiddle in hand, naturally looking particularly awkward.

"I tell you what we can do," said Kate, "we can go and take our lesson in the laundry, because I know it will vex pappy if we lose it altogether."

"It is," said I, "indeed an essential point in your education."

"Besides," added Kate, "Mr. Kittington ~~has~~ had to come so early on purpose to give it us."

"Do what you please, my love," said I, "only I assure you Harriet is not well enough to bear the noise here."

I did this civilly and quietly, although I felt sick and wretched, because I did not like to allow the dancing-master to see that the domination of the Falwassers was so irksome to us as it really was, and because I did not wish the professor of the Terpsichorean art—or science—as the case may be, to think that I underrated either the importance of the study, or his own personal assiduity in giving his attendance; and so I conclude they *did* retire to the laundry, for I heard no more fiddling, nor did I see the young ladies, as it turned out, till a late period of the day.

I sent for Foxcroft, inquired how her mistress was, not daring to venture near the room myself. She told me that she was going on very well. This satisfied me: I did not quite understand what it meant; but the words "very well," conveyed to my mind the intelligence generally which I wished to receive. I went to the breakfast-room; there every thing was in order—comfortable and proper—just the same as if Harriet had been in perfect health. So it is if the master of a house dies—the whole establishment goes on seemingly of itself, for a week or two, without being in the slightest degree affected by his disappearance. This arises from the fact, that after all the discussion and dissertations upon feeling and gratitude, and affection, and all the



rest of it, in the relative position of servant and master, there is nothing in either death or destruction sufficiently strong to break in upon the routine of duty, so long as it is paid for. The man who cleans the plate, cleans it as energetically, while the man whose plate it was three days before, lies upon tressels screwed up in his coffin, as he did that day week, when the defunct used his portion of it. Kittington, the dancing-master, in his stockinets and pumps, would just as enthusiastically have taught my half or three-quarter nieces (whichever they are) to jump and wriggle and twist, to the tune of the "Opera Hat," if Harriet had been lying dead in the next room, instead of being only seriously indisposed: and so it is in all callings and professions. Hamlet, we all know, asks Horatio, speaking of the grave-digger—

"Hath this fellow no feeling in his trade?"

And as Shakspeare shows in every line he has written the most perfect knowledge of human nature that man without inspiration—was it without?—ever possessed, it may be thought absurd to say one syllable more upon the subject, except that although still young I have lived long enough to observe, that so far from a man *not* having a feeling in his business, it is completely the reverse; his feeling in his business is so strong, that it supersedes any feeling towards any trade except his own. Send for your carpenter, bid him put you up some fifty yards of treillage whereupon you wish your jessamines and honeysuckles to twine, or over which you propose your clustering ivy to creep; *his* point is the treillage, and in order that he may make what he thinks a workman-like job of the treillage, half your jessamines and honeysuckles and two-thirds of your ivy are destroyed. To him follows the painter, who cares as little for the carpenter as he does for the remnant of your shrubs and climbers; *he*, only desirous of setting himself off as an artist in *his* way, not only paints the treillage, but covers with his *invisible green*—*visible* to the naked eye—the stems, branches, and leaves of every one of the pet plants, which unconsciously conniving at your scheme of screening, are good enough to intertwine themselves in your treillage. The bricklayer heedlessly annihilates the efforts of the painter, in making *his* work strong and good which is to support the superstructure; and the plumber, who comes to consolidate certain corners and crannies, completes the job by sending his Etna-like rivers of boiling lead over the roots of the unhappy spe-

cimens for which all the pains have been taken and all the pence expended.

I remember hearing Mathews, who, as the reader knows, was my first enticer to dramatic writing, tell a story of a man who had made, with exquisite neatness and beauty, so far as the word is applicable to such a subject, a Hessian boot, the height of which did not exceed three or four inches, but the soul and body of which presented as beautiful a specimen of workmanship as ever was seen. Mathews was delighted with the ingenuity and skill displayed in the construction of this little *bijou*, and offered to buy it. The artist declined selling it. Mathews then proposed that he should let him have a repetition of it. The difference between a repetition and a copy has been established by Lawrence and other illustrious painters. "No, sir," said the man, "I would do any thing for *you* that I could do for any body, but I made that little boot in a moment of enthusiasm, and I feel confident that I never could make another like it."

This is a proof that a man may be really enthusiastic, and have the powerful "feeling of his business," which I contend generally exists, and which ought always to exist to ensure success; and I say so, not only upon Dr. Johnson's principle, that, whatever is worth doing, is worth doing well, but because I am certain that, unless a man believe the particular pursuit in which he is engaged, let it be what it may, to be vitally important to society at large, he never will be any thing in the craft or trade which he may have adopted.

I have spoken of one actor—whose whole heart and mind are occupied in his profession, Mathews—and not only are his heart and mind engaged in it, <sup>as</sup> the "means whereby he doth sustain his house;" but they are more honourably and more enthusiastically involved in an anxiety to uphold the character of the profession which he so brightly adorns. Terry—a man of great reading—of powerful intellect—and of high available talent—has but recently come amongst us; but if I prophesy aright, Terry will never attain his just rank as an actor. The reason is plain; he treats his art as a trade, and feels always disposed to laugh at himself, even when he is on the edge of a great performance. If he take a fancy to a part, he will act it, *con amore*, but only as a joke; and although still new to the London boards, it is clear to me that his perception of the ridiculous, makes him sneer at the success which his not half-developed powers procure him: so, as I have already said, it is with all men; and as a proof how far the "enthusiasm of the moment" will carry me, I will write down here, that which, as I never read what I

write, and as my papers are not intended for the public eye, or public criticism, it does not much matter if I have written down before, a dialogue I once over-heard between two scavengers at the corner of Spring-gardens.

They were sweeping up the mud, and spooning it into a cart with an almost inevitable certainty of *Shrapnelizing* the "passing villagers," when in a pause from their labours, one, *he* with the shovel, said to the other, "I say, Bill, what's gone with Jim, I han't seen him about a long time?"

"Can't say," said Broom; "I guess as how son'think's happened to him unforeseen."

"He was a good un," said Scoop.

"Yes," said he of the besom, "he was a smartish chap at a crossing, or any thing straight forward; but as for a bit of fancy work, sweeping round a post, or any thing o' that sort, he hadn't no kind of taste whatsumever."

If I am inadvertently repeating myself, I cannot help it; the dialogue seems wonderfully well calculated to exhibit

"A ruling passion, strong in mud,"

And still better to prove the justice of my original aphorism, that, without enthusiasm, all labour is in vain.

When the young ladies, who seemed entirely to sympathize with the dancing-master as to the importance of the lesson, had flitted to the laundry as a fit scene of action, I waited impatiently for—what I could hardly define. Cuthbert at length got up, was dressed, and, as usual, wheeled into breakfast, but Mrs. Brandyball pleaded headach, I have every just reason for thinking sincerely, and did not make her appearance; Cuthbert and I were therefore *tête à tête* at the morning's repast.

"Poor Tommy," said Cuthbert, "is—ah, dear—very unwell; he came to see me while Hutton was getting me up; he is all over red spots,—I must send for Sniggs, after breakfast."

Now, of all things in the world that I did not desire, or rather of all things in the world I particularly wished to avoid, was a visit from Sniggs in the course of this morning. I knew him so well, and was so perfectly aware of the activity of his interference, that I was convinced neither solicitation nor remonstrance would prevent his making his way to poor Harriet, whose very safety might depend upon her not being excited, as I knew she would be by his appearance in her room, the moment he heard she was unwell.

"I think," said I, "as I expect Dr. Downey here in an hour or two, it would be no bad thing to let *him* see Tom."

"True," said Cuthbert, "so he may; but then I asked Sniggs to come here to-day to play chess, and it is only his coming a little earlier, and then he can see Harriet, and so, because the physician, whatever you call him, may not be here in time—eh—it is as well, as Mrs. Brandyball says, to have two strings to one's bow—eh?"

All these arrangements of Cuthbert's were made, as usual, unconsciously, as if expressly for the subversion of all my prudential plans of operation; and yet I did not see how I could counteract their effect; for if I confided to him Harriet's disinclination for Sniggs, the first thing Cuthbert would most assuredly do, would be to tell him the whole story the moment he arrived, and thus make an enemy, even if he were yet friendly, of the peripatetic reporter of Blissfold.

"Now," said Cuthbert, "have you formed any plans with regard to the young stranger?"

"What," said I, "the child unborn!"

"Yes," said Cuthbert, "I am to be god-father; and you shall find, my dear Gilbert, that I do not consider the obligations of such a connexion merely nominal. If it is a boy, let him have a profession—make him a lawyer—or—eh—perhaps that will be too fatiguing,—and if it is a girl——"

"A thousand thanks for all your kindnesses," said I; "but let us secure the treasure, before we discuss how to dispose of it."

"Nothing like foresight," said Cuthbert; "I am sorry for poor Tommy—I—hadn't Hutton better step to Sniggs's?"

The kindness which mingled with my brother's anxiety to upset my schemes was so remarkable, and so genuine, that I did not know how to thwart him in his wishes, and was on the point of ringing for his man, when the sound of wheels caught my ear. I turned to the window, and saw, to my delight and surprise, the great object of my present solicitude, Dr. Downey's carriage rapidly approaching the house.

"Here's the doctor," said I; "we need not send for Sniggs; he shall see Tom before he goes up-stairs."

"Ah," said Cuthbert, looking quite satisfied, "that will do nicely."

I hastened to the hall to welcome the physician, whose early appearance was very agreeably accounted for by the fact, that my servant on horseback had overtaken him about four miles from Ashmead, as he was returning from a visit

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of a similar nature to that which he immediately turned his horses' heads to pay to Harriet.

I presented the doctor to my brother, and then went upstairs, to apprise Mrs. Wells of his arrival. Cuthbert, who thought of nothing but Tommy and his rash, began immediately to open his case to the doctor, who, not being the least aware that there was a second patient to attend to, was mystified, in a great degree, by Cuthbert, who, in consequence of what I had said with respect to Downey's seeing the boy before he visited Harriet, thought that I had left the room to fetch him for inspection.

"I always say," said Cuthbert, "that prevention is better than cure, and that the earlier any thing of this sort—eh, is looked after, the better."

"Certainly, sir," said the doctor, gracefully bowing his well-powdered head, "nothing is wiser than precaution."

"I don't exactly understand the cause of the complaint," said Cuthbert; "but, I dare say, you will be able to tell when you see the patient."

"Why, said the doctor, with a look which implied some little doubt of Cuthbert's state of mind, "Yes, I"—

"I think it may proceed from cold," said Cuthbert; "being out at night will do it sometimes—letting off squibs and fireworks—silly thing—poor dear, nearly lost an eye already, poor thing."

The Doctor pushed back his chair, and stuck the poker into the fire.

"Yes, sir," said he, "very likely."

"Great romps overheat themselves," said Cuthbert; "my two daughters are never half careful enough in that respect; I am often afraid that something of the same sort will happen to *them*."

"Oh," said Downey, walking towards the window, "yes, sir, as you said just now, caution is wisdom."

"Yes," said Cuthbert, delighted with the urbane manner in which the physician humoured him, "and especially about *their* age, poor things, before they have done growing."

"You are quite right, sir," said Downey, "quite—perfectly, nothing can be more judicious. Does Mr. Gurney expect me to follow him?"

"No, no," said Cuthbert, "he is gone to fetch your patient—probably dirty hands want washing,—hair to be combed, or something of that sort,—wicked little thing, and as full of mischief as possible."

What farther might have been said to illuminate the physician, had the dialogue lasted any longer, it is impossible

to surmise. Certes, my friend Downey's eyes greeted me with a look of infinite satisfaction as I made my appearance.

"Well, Gilbert," said Cuthbert, "where's Tommy?"

"Oh," said I, "I quite forgot, I will ring for Hutton to fetch him."

"I thought you were gone on purpose," said Cuthbert, "else I could have rung myself, or, at all events, have requested the Doctor to do so for me."

"May I presume to ask," said the Doctor, "who Tommy is?"

"A son-in-law of my brother's," said I, "who feels unwell, and whom my brother wishes you to see."

"Oh," said the Doctor, "I understand—I did not at first see:" saying which, he withdrew the poker from the fire, and laid it on the fender.

Hutton obeyed the summons, received his orders, and in a few minutes returned with Master Tommy, whose appearance was by no means prepossessing.

"Come hear, Tommy, my dear," said Cuthbert; "let this gentleman look at you."

"Shan't," said Tom. "I won't be physicked—not for no body;—the pimples is come hout, and they may go hin agin for all I care, only they hitches like winkin."

"My dear sir," said Dr. Downey, "there is no question about the young gentleman,—a clear case of small-pox."

"Small-pox, sir!" said Cuthbert; "I never had it, sir. I shall die of it. Tommy, my love, go to the other end of the room. Gilbert, open the window,—ring for Hutton,—get me some eau de luce and water,—camphor.—Oh!—you really don't mean it?"

"I do, indeed, sir," said the Doctor. "I am happy to say that the character of the eruption at present appears favourable; attention and care will most probably get him well through it, I have no doubt: it is of the distinct kind, and of course less serious than the confluent. I will write a prescription for him before I go up stairs; he had better be put to bed, and of course his diet is to be of the most sparing character."

"I won't be starved," said Tommy; "and I won't go to bed, and I won't take no physic."

"Oh, yes, my dear, you will, I am sure," said the Physician. "Your health requires it; you would be in great danger if you did not do as we tell you, and perhaps would die."

"Then I should be poked into the pit-hole," said Tommy. "I'll jump out of bed the minute I'm put in. I'll eat what-

ever I can; and as for the physic, see if I don't shy it all under the grate."

"No you won't, my dear," said Cuthbert. "Hutton,—Doctor, if you don't want to examine him any more,—Hutton, put down the eau de luce, and take Master Tommy away,—there's a dear."

"I will ask him a few questions, with your permission," said Dr. Downey; "but we can go into another room."

"I shan't tell for nothing," said Tommy.

"If you please, sir," said Foxcroft, rushing into the room very pale. "Mrs. Wells wants the Doctor,—my mistress—"

"What!" said I, "here, Tom, the Doctor shall see you by-and-by. Now, Doctor."

"Doctor," screamed poor Cuthbert at the top of his voice, "What's to be done for *me*? I shall catch this infernal disorder."

"What disorder?" cried Mrs. Brandyball, who came sailing into the room. "What disorder?"

"The small-pox, ma'am," said Cuthbert. "I never had it."

"Small-pox!" screamed the lady. "Nor I, Mr. Gurney," and forthwith she fell into hysterics.

Such a scene never had I witnessed. Tom roaring,—Foxcroft crying,—Mrs. Brandyball hooting,—Cuthbert groaning,—the dogs barking,—two canary-birds singing as loud as they possibly could,—Hutton scolding the dogs,—I hustling the Doctor out of the room,—and Kitty and Jane scudding across the hall to take leave of Mr. Kittington, the dancing-master.

I led the Doctor up to my wife's room, and having just looked in, Mrs. Wells held up her hand to caution me against speaking. I heard a faint murmur of complaint from my beloved wife,—the door was shut upon me,—and I burst into tears. I did,—and I am not ashamed to record the fact.

Oh, the thrilling, aching, throbbing pain of anxiety which seemed to affect every part of my body and limbs; my hands were icy cold, my tongue was parched, my knees trembled; my kind, my affectionate, my darling Harriet was in pain and in sorrow, and I unable either to assist her or sooth her in her sufferings. I did not know how to dispose of myself; return to the breakfast parlour I could not; where I was, I dared not stop, lest I should hear the sound of Harriet's voice in grief and anguish. I went down stairs, I fled to my sanctum, and shut myself in my library, to pray for the safety and restoration of the being I loved best on earth.

Silence had been restored, and I heard nothing where I sat, except the subdued ringing of the servants' dinner bell, which told me that I had been for upwards of two hours in my concealment; presently, however, I was hunted out: Hutton knocked at the door, and after repeating the operation twice, I felt obliged to answer, to prevent a continuation of his thumping,—my brother wanted me.

I of course obeyed the summons; and there I found Cuthbert covered with a shawl and a blanket, extended on the sofa, with the three windows of the room all open.

"What a thing to have happened!" said Cuthbert; "it is,—dear me,—what shall we do?—poor dear Mrs. Brandyball never had it,—nor either of the girls. I have sent for Sniggs,—they have shut themselves up in Kitty's room, with camphor bags and eau de Cologne till he comes. They are all going to be vaccinated,—so am I,—and Hutton and I have been speaking to Mrs. Habijam, and the coachman, and the two housemaids, and they have all agreed, and I want you to let Foxcroft be vaccinated, too,—there's nothing like precaution."

"But, my dear brother," said I, "all these people have had either the small-pox or been vaccinated before, rely upon it."

"Ah, but," said Cuthbert, "the cow-pox is like every thing else, it wears out; besides, it was not discovered when I was born, nor when you were born. I don't recollect having had the small-pox, nor do either of my girls."

"Probably not," said I; "and probably none of the establishment recollect a similar event in any of their lives, inasmuch as it generally occurs at a period to which the memory of man reacheth not."

"Well, it can do no harm," said Cuthbert; "let Sniggs see poor Tommy as soon as he comes, and then have him well fumigated,—ah,—or washed,—any thing you think safest,—and then let him begin his operations. I'll have poor Pilly vaccinated, too."

"Who?" said I.

"Pilgarlick," said Cuthbert, looking the picture of despair.

"What, your tom-cat," exclaimed I.

"I think it will be safest," sighed he. Hutton paused in his operation of bathing his master's temples, to see whether he were pleased to be facetious, or was in sober earnest. I am convinced it was the purest bit of matter-of-fact solicitude that ever man expressed.

The arrival of Sniggs was the signal for action, I was



ordered to convey him to Tom's apartment, in order to satisfy Cuthbert as to the reality of the existence of the disease he so much dreaded; and accordingly I conveyed him to the room where Tom had compounded with himself as to not going to bed, by having taken off his jacket and waistcoat, and laid down on the quilt with his boots on, ready for a start whenever he felt disposed to run riot.

"There," said I to the apothecary, "there's a patient for you. What's the matter with him?"

"Hold up, Master Tom," said Sniggs; "look to the light—eh,—umph,—feel any itching?"

"Yes, I do," said Tom.

"Umph,—I see," said Sniggs; "obstructed perspiration,—a sort of nettle-rash,—better out than in,—little cooling physic will set all to rights."

"Why," said I, "we were thinking it was the small-pox."

"The small-pox, my dear Mr. Gurney!" said Sniggs; not a bit of it. Where's the synocha,—where the languor and drowsiness which invariably characterize that complaint? No, no; the blood wants cooling. I'll send him something which will set him all to rights in no time."

"Well," said I, "but do *you* know we generally believe it to be the small-pox."

"Ha, ha!" said Sniggs, "that's deuced good; who is likely to know best?"

"My brother says it is small-pox," said I.

"Oh, very likely," said Sniggs.

"Mrs. Brandyball says so," continued I; "so does the housekeeper, and——"

"My dear sir," said Sniggs, "these are all very respectable people in their way, but wholly incapable of distinguishing the difference between the most dangerous case of variola confluens and the simplest effect of febris urtica."

"Well," said I, rather worried at being pooh-poohed in so decided a manner, "Dr. Downey, who is here, says it is the small-pox."

"The deuce he does!" said Sniggs. "Dr. Downey here,—is he?—umph,—that's Mrs. Wells's doing,—never mind,—does *he* say it is the small-pox?—Held up your face again, Master Tom. Small-pox, eh?" Sniggs rubbed the boy's forehead, and looked very wise. "Dr. Downey says it is small-pox;—put out your tongue, Master Tom.—So,—by Jove, it is small-pox, sure enough;—never like to create unnecessary alarm,—umph,—very odd. Oh! yes, yes,—

that's small-pox,—not the least doubt of it,—never can mistake *that*."

The suddenness of Snigg's conviction with regard to Tom's disorder would have affected me more perhaps than it actually did, if I had not recollected that a much more eminent man did precisely the same thing when one of the Princes of the Blood caught, in mature age, and for the second time, the measles. Upon that occasion his Royal Highness having ascertained from two of the most eminent physicians of the day the real nature of his complaint, subsequently sent for his facetious body-physician, who, like Sniggs in the present instance, most strenuously denied the least resemblance between measles and his Royal Highness's rash, until, being informed that Baille and Heberden had both decided that measles was the complaint—like Sniggs, the worthy doctor looked again, and decided that measles it was.

Having now received the authentication of all our worst fears, I proceeded to Cuthbert, having previously informed our apothecary of his extreme desire to have every living inhabitant of the house vaccinated, and of his anxious wish for his complete purification, previous to his visit. Sniggs, delighted with the idea of having any thing to do, seemed smoothed at once, and smothered the angry feeling which I saw rankling with regard to Dr. Downey's visit; however, I was a *l'abri*, for he laid the whole scheme at my poor dear mother-in-law's door, and believing in the proverb which makes the mother say—

"My son is my son till he gets him a wife,  
My daughter's my daughter all the days of her life,"

imputed to her influence over Harriet his very disagreeable exclusion from the honour of ushering the heir or heiress of Ashmead, as the case might be, into this world of trouble. So far I got off scot free, and I was not sorry for it; because, as poor Mrs. Wells had long before rendered herself obnoxious to what Lieutenant Merman used to call Snigg's "sculduddery," a little more of his ire could do *her* no harm, and I might escape unscathed.

In the hall we encountered Mrs. Habijam, who appeared entirely lost in a dread of the consequences of the infection; she entreated Sniggs to make all the haste he could to his own house, to procure a sufficient supply of what she called the "various" matter; in short, I never saw a panic so general or so serious. I congratulated myself, however,

on having escaped Mrs. Brandyball and the young ladies, whose appearance would have detained me from fresh inquiries about Harriet.

All I heard was that every thing was going on extremely well, and that Doctor Downey wished to know when luncheon would be ready; this was music to my ears—he could not care about luncheon if every thing was *not* going on extremely well, and I felt delighted in having the opportunity, under such circumstances, of talking to the man to whose skill and judgment I was to be indebted, under Providence, for the safety of my dearest love.

Luncheon was ready, but Cuthbert had retired to his own room. The exertion of being very much frightened had been more than he could bear; besides, as he was resolved to be the first person in the family vaccinated, he determined, like Cæsar, to die with decency, and accordingly betook himself to his bed in order to catch the gentle infection from the lancet of our Lampedo.

"Well, my dear sir," said the doctor, "we are all doing as well as possible; the sweetness of our dear patient's temper cannot fail to be in the highest degree beneficial to her during her illness. I think I never saw such mildness and amiability. Great care must be taken about the young gentleman's small-pox. I trust we shall have one child in the family, in an hour or two, about whose having been vaccinated or not there can be no question; and upon that account I should say the lad ought to be removed while he is yet able to bear it."

"But whither is he to go?" said I; "and will his affectionate father-in-law suffer him to be separated from him?"

"I am, of course, not competent to answer either of those questions," said the Doctor; "but I only do my duty in apprizing you of the danger to be apprehended to the infant by his remaining here, and having communication with those who are also in the habit of going into Mrs. Gurney's room."

"What can I do?" said I; "my brother is actually in bed; he, I am sure, will neither let Tom go without him, nor with him—in the one case he would apprehend the worst consequences to the boy, and in the other the most dreadful results to himself."

"I merely speak professionally, Mr. Gurney," said the doctor, "and not with any view of interfering with your domestic arrangements; but were I to remain silent upon the subject, I feel I should incur a very serious responsibility."

It struck me that perhaps Sniggs would allow Tom to be removed to his house, whither perhaps my brother might be induced to let him go, with the satisfactory conviction that he would be constantly under the superintendence of the medical man in whom, spite of my mother-in-law's prejudices, he had an exceedingly high opinion. I mentioned this expedient to the Doctor, who, being acquainted with Sniggs only by name, and totally ignorant of the terms upon which he lived with our family, hesitated—as he generally did—to give any decided opinion upon its probable success. I resolved, at all events, to mention it to Cuthbert, before Sniggs's reappearance at Ashmead. I did so, and found him by no means disposed to expose his darling lad to the difficulties of a removal, or the inconveniences of a strange house.

"No," said Cuthbert, "I had better go—Mrs. Brandyball would like to take the two girls—you know they were going on Tuesday—so—I think, after I have undergone the operation, I will try to be got up, and go with the girls and their governess to Bath—eh, dear!—what a terrific idea!—how dreadful a circumstance!—however, we must make three days of it—it must be nearly a hundred miles from this to Bath."

"Yes, my dear Cuthbert," said I; "but however this plan may secure *you* and the girls from danger, and however happy we should be to pay every attention to Tom in your absence, it leaves poor Harriet and her child exposed to extreme peril."

"I have ordered Hutton to sprinkle vinegar all over the house," said Cuthbert, "and to fumigate the passage down stairs with gunpowder."

"Yes," replied I; "I can vouch for his activity too: I never smelt any thing so horrible in my life."

"Ah!" said Cuthbert, "never mind smells—dear, dear— isn't it dreadful?"

"Well," said I, seeing that I had no chance of succeeding alone in obtaining an order of removal for Master Tom, "I will go back to Doctor Downey, and the moment Sniggs comes he shall be sent to you."

Sniggs did come—I presented him to the physician, and felt at once pleased and perplexed by finding his opinion with regard to the removal of Master Falwasser entirely agree with that of the Doctor. Sniggs was essentially good-natured, extremely fond of meddling, delighted to be "doing," and excessively anxious to show the "public" of Blissfold that he stood exceedingly well with the family at

Ashmead, in spite of Mrs. Gurney having, under her mother's influence, called in other medical aid; and he—as it were intuitively—started the very proposition which I was about to make.

“Why not take Master Tom to my house?” said Sniggs; “I shall have him there under my own eye. Mrs. Sniggs will be as careful of him as if he were our own. All difficulty will be removed, and I shall be too happy to be of any use in relieving you from your difficulties.”

“Have you any objection to open the business to my brother?” said I.

“Not the least,” replied the apothecary. “That he ought to be moved from this house nobody can doubt; he can be removed at present without danger—where can he go better than to the house of a medical practitioner, in whom, as I flatter myself, his father-in-law has so much confidence! I’ll go this instant—give my opinion and advice—vaccinate my patient, and then make every necessary arrangement.”

The natural readiness for action which uniformly characterized the proceedings of Mr. Sniggs, blended with the prospect of the profits arising from his successful attendance upon the darling lout, filled him with energy and eloquence. What he said or what he did in the way of persuasion to my brother, I do not pretend to guess. All I know is, that in less than half an hour the operator returned to the dinner-room, where Downey and I were sitting, and with sparkling eyes and a joyous countenance announced the consent of Cuthbert to the arrangement, provided the Doctor would give a favourable opinion as to the safety of the young patient’s transport from one place to the other.

Our difficulties now were nearly overcome—we were sure of the Doctor’s voice in our favour, and a few minutes more sufficed for the arrangement of the whole affair. I confess I felt myself relieved of a heavy burden, and not a little anxious to see the project carried into execution. Having got so far, I ventured to suggest to Cuthbert that there would in that case be no necessity for his leaving us; but Hutton’s entrance into the room to mention that one of the housemaids, he was afraid, was sickening, set all doubt upon that question at rest; in fact, as it appeared to me, the preparations for the joint departure of Mrs. Brandyball, the girls, and Cuthbert were already far advanced, and that a regular communication had been kept up between the high contracting powers, who for their own separate and particular reasons had resolved upon leaving Ashmead immediately, and leaving it together.

The girls were tired of us already, and as the mirthful noises and romps, in which they much rejoiced, would be of a necessity suspended for the next two or three weeks, they anticipated more of dulness and quietude during the rest of their stay than suited their tastes and genius; and this, added to the necessity of Mrs. Brandyball's return to her seminary by a particular day, concluded that faction in their resolve to decamp, having first undergone the preservative and preventive process which was to be universally inflicted by the skilful hand of Sniggs.

With respect to Cuthbert, kind as his professions were, and liberal as his conduct might be, I could not help observing an increase of that indifference towards Harriet which I had previously noticed in a slighter degree. Kitty's private consultations and conversations with her father-in-law struck me to be somehow connected with this disagreeable change. And I could not help fancying that his invincible desire to leave Ashmead was in some degree attributable to the same influence. What I feared was that the influence—powerful as it most unquestionably was—was not spontaneously exerted. I was alarmed lest its operations should be directed by the more matured judgment of Mrs. Brandyball. What her objects were I could not exactly define; but I felt convinced that she had some point of first-rate importance to herself to carry, and I could not divest myself of the idea that she made Kitty the tool with which she might carry on her machinations.

To be candid, however, as one may be, at least when he writes for no eye but his own, I did not regret, in this particular instance, the success of the young lady's persuasiveness. To put Cuthbert to any inconvenience would have given me the greatest pain and uneasiness, but he preferred leaving me—so far I had nothing to reproach myself with; and as for the removal of the rest of the party, nothing could be more agreeable. Accordingly, I submitted to his expressed will. Less than two hours were allowed for the packing of the carriage in which the travellers were to make their journey. Four horses were ordered to be at the door at half-past three, by which arrangement it was proposed that the party should reach Salisbury by seven or eight o'clock, where they were to sleep, Hutton and Cuthbert's other servant, with *their* luggage, filling Mrs. Brandyball's post-chaise, and bringing up the rear.

It was determined, moreover, that Tom should not be apprized of any of these arrangements, inasmuch as, if he had even quietly acquiesced in them, there must have been a

parting, which would have defeated the main object of the flight. Sniggs therefore undertook to amuse the lad by performing various tricks of magic and conjuration in his room while my guests were getting under way.

Dr. Downey had resumed his close attendance upon my wife, whose side her affectionate mother had never once left since she came to her in the morning. Wells and Bessy had come over from the Rectory, and were just in time to take leave of the travellers; and within a few minutes of the proposed time, I received the parting kisses of Kitty and Jane, handed Mrs. Brandyball into the carriage, and shook hands with Cuthbert, feeling, I can scarcely tell why, a presentiment that I never should see him at Ashmead again. He seemed to me to have thrown himself—or rather, passively to have fallen—into the hands of strangers; and when he bid me farewell, he did not make the faintest allusion to Harriet, or express the slightest wish to hear the result of her confinement.

The subsequent scene with Tom was very remarkable. Sniggs having made himself excessively entertaining, suggested to Tom that if he liked to come to his house, to dine and sleep, while there was so much bustle going on at Ashmead, it would do him no harm, and that there was no objection to his doing so. Tom jumped at the proposal: and Sniggs having taken the proper opportunity of sending for a hack chaise from the inn, charitably preferring the risk of infecting a public carriage, into which fifty strangers might in the next day or two be buttoned, to using any vehicle belonging to the family, wrapped the hopeful youth up in a great coat and a cloak, and carried him off unresistingly to his residence in the High-street of Blissfold; nor was it until the next morning that Master Tom clearly understood the character of his visit there; he was then enlightened by the enforcement of the severe discipline which had at first been ordered, and clearly comprehended that he had been sent away from home on purpose to be out of the way. The rage and passion of the young gentleman exceeded all bounds, and it required main force and the intervention of a strong lock to keep him where he was. At length, however, as the disorder advanced, his spirit sank, and he continued to take the medicines which were prescribed, and not take the food which was proscribed, with a sulky sullenness which, if not more amiable, was at least more endurable than his violence.

At half past seven o'clock on the evening of the departure of the amiable family and their charming friend, I be-

came the father of a fine boy, pronounced by Mrs. Wells and the nurse to be as like me as possible. The Doctor looked pleased, and congratulating me with the greatest warmth, announced *that* which was the welcomest part of his important intelligence, that the mother and child were "as well as could be expected."



## CHAPTER VII.

"So then, I am a father,—a new tie binds me to the world, and Harriet absolutely worships her infant. All is going on well. The house is perfectly quiet; even the Canary birds, unprovoked and unexcited, are mute. Still I occasionally hear a sound hitherto strange to Ashmead,—the shrill cry of my son and heir; he that, please God, is to be hereafter something good and great. How strange is such an anticipation! Only fancy that Dr. Johnson was once a baby; and that the height of my ambition would be to see that dear, little, soft, red thing up stairs, just such a man as he, in due course of time; but, to be sure, all the babies I ever saw were soft, and red, and remarkably like their fathers, and so is mine."

This was the sort of soliloquy in which I was indulging when Mrs. Wells came to me in the garden to inquire, at Harriet's suggestion, whether I had written to announce the event to Cuthbert.

"Where am I to find him?" said I. "When he went away, he said nothing about either my wife or my child. He left no address nor any direction where a letter might find him."

"That odious Mrs. Brandyball," said Mrs. Wells, "will no doubt be able to forward any thing to him; and Harriet feels that it would be extremely wrong not to let him hear."

"She is quite right," said I; "but there is something extremely repugnant to my feelings in making Mrs. Brandyball the medium of such a communication."

"What else *can* you do?" said my prudent mother-in-law. "As the child is a boy, and as your brother has expressed his desire of standing godfather, it would be losing an excellent chance of a provision for him hereafter."

"That desire," said I, "was expressed before the sudden

dispersion of the tribe; in all probability he has by this time forgotten it altogether; and as it is quite certain that we shall hear from some of them in the way of inquiry after Tom's health, I feel very much disposed to postpone the announcement until the opportunity offers of making it direct."

"Of course, my dear Gilbert," said Mrs. Wells, "you are master of your own house, and must do as you please."

Yes, thought I to myself, I feel more master of it than ever I did before: but this by no means disagreeable consciousness was not altogether without alloy. In the first place, the departure of Cuthbert had entirely changed the manners and customs of Ashmead, just at the very moment when, from being isolated myself, the alteration was made more manifest; and in the second place, the alteration was effected in an unpleasant manner;—in short, I was worried and vexed at my own emancipation from the control I had so long felt irksome. What strange creatures we are!

"In *my* mind," said Wells, who had joined us, "your brother Cuthbert is snared,—as safe as a hare in a poacher's bag;—his *fanienti* disposition and almost helpless habits have no chance against the bustling activity of that Mrs. Brandyball, whose real character, thanks to our convivial re-union the other evening, we are tolerably well acquainted with."

"I am apprehensive ——" said I.

"I go beyond you," replied Wells: "however, as my poor Fan used to say when I took leave to hint an occasional doubt about our late friend Merman's disinterestedness, it is of no use anticipating evils."

"Is there no chance," said I, "of that affair ever being on again?"

"I think not," said Wells. "Indeed with all my avowed predilection for early marriages, I should not wish a daughter of mine to submit to caprice, or permit her affections to overcome what I consider the proper dignity of a woman's character. As to her taste with regard to the man, with that I have nothing to do. I was satisfied that a mutual attachment existed between them, and as I saw no objection to their marriage, I did not interfere with the courtship. When I thought it had continued quite long enough, I spoke to him on the subject indirectly,—hypothetically——"

"Yes," said I; and all the scene in the old dining-parlour at the rectory was re-enacted on my mind in a moment.

"And," continued Wells, "there was nothing in his conduct of which we have any right or reason to complain. He

admitted the existence of the attachment, but pleaded his want of fortune as the reason of his continued silence on the subject; and when I ventured to throw out a hint as to the expectations he had mentioned to me, from his aunt, Miss Malony, he, for the first time, confessed that her liberality was saddled with a condition, which, as you know, must inevitably separate him from Fanny."

"There's the rub," said I.

"Yes," said Wells, "and although he ought unquestionably either to have communicated that contingency to me, or have made up his mind to marry upon the means he actually possesses, I can easily understand his unwillingness to bring an intimacy to a conclusion, in which, as he protests, the happiness of his life was engaged. He has now left Blissfold, as he says, with the intention of softening his aunt's stern decree—that her money and her niece go together; but I told him that I considered the matter finally decided, as I felt it would be exceedingly repugnant to my daughter's feelings to induce the old lady to deprive her favourite relation of the portion she proposed to give her, even if I believed it at all likely that she would be induced so to do. I knew Fanny never would be happy if he succeeded; but I am certain that he will *not*, and so the less we say now of the lieutenant the better. He intends to effect an exchange of duty, and join his regiment on service, probably taking his well-portioned lady with him as a wife."

"Surely," said I, who felt the greatest difficulty, with the best intentions, of conquering my first dislike to him, "surely he should have considered all this before——"

"Ay, ay," interrupted my father-in-law, "so he should, but he fancied himself in love; and then, Gilbert, we all of us know that we are not quite so *clair-voyant* as we are at other times. However," continued he, "we must try and rouse Fanny from her 'doleful dumps.' Now we are all going on well here—your *charming* young nephew is thriving, and I mean to make up a little party, of which you must be one, to go to the exhibition of some most extraordinary artist, Mr. Delaville, who exhibits at our theatre to-night, after the fashion of George Alexander Stevens, Dibdin, and those other great geniuses who, by dint of versatility of talent, contrive to amuse and delight an audience all alone by themselves."\*

"If Harriet is——"

\* At the time Mr. Gurney made these memoranda, the most eminent genius in that line, Mathews, had not adopted it.—ED.

"Harriet certainly can't be of the party," said Wells; "but my good kind wife will keep *her* company, and go you must. Sniggs tells me that the artist is capital—first chop, as the Chinese say; and Fan and Bessy, you and I, Sniggs himself, who is as good an audience as he is a performer, and some one or two others, will make a strong party in favour of the *entrepreneur*."

"Really," said I, "I am so worried about Cuthbert, so anxious about Harriet, and——"

"Can our interest be separate?" said the reverend patron of the entertainment. "No, no—you never had a child before, I have had many; I know the utter uselessness of moping about, a helpless animal—thinking, and wondering, and complaining about nothing. You come with us; the entertainment is called 'Frolics in Africa and Reflections at Home,' interspersed with songs, dances, imitations, and recitations, and all the other 'ations' in the world."

"Well, if Harriet gives me leave," said I——

"Oh, my dear Gilbert," said the pastor, "that is rather too much of a joke. Give you leave!—why, I think I know enough of her to know that she would feel pleasure in knowing that you were amused—so, if you will, come to us, or shall we come to you at seven?"

"Oh," said I, "dine *here*, and if we must go, let us start hence *en masse*."

"Why," said Wells, "fond as I admit myself to be of amusement in which I see no crime, I should not press this so much upon you if it were not for Fan—I am sure she broods over this sudden rupture with Merman, and if she can be diverted, I know it will do her good."

"You need say nothing more," said I, "I am perfectly ready to join you. I wonder we have not seen some of the bills of the performance."

"I have got those," said Wells; "and we will secure our places; and if we can but secure one or two hearty laughs, either with the performer or at him, my purpose will be fully answered."

"There I perfectly agree with you," said I; "and I thank my good stars that I am not particularly fastidious as to how the laugh is obtained. I am as great a fool at a pantomime as I was when I was fourteen years old, and enjoy the kickings and cuffings of Harlequin and Pantaloon with as much relish now as I did then."

Addison says it would be an endless task to mention the innumerable shifts that small wits put in practice to raise a laugh. Bullock in a short coat, and Norris in a long one,

seldom fail of this effect. In ordinary comedies, a broad and a narrow-brimmed hat are different characters. Sometimes the wit of a scene lies in a shoulder-knot, and sometimes in a pair of whiskers. A lover running about the stage, with his head peeping out of a barrel, was thought a very good jest in King Charles the Second's time, and invented by one of the first wits of that age. What care I, if, by some extravagance, some unaccountable absurdity, I am made momentarily to forget the things which prey upon my mind? I am satisfied;—and if Mr. Delaville, whose real name is, in all probability, Dobbs, Dobbins, or Doddle, diverts my thoughts from subjects which give me pain, I feel myself very much indebted to the said Dobbs, Dobbins, or Doddle, as the case may be. Voltaire says that Providence has given us hope and sleep as a compensation for the many cares of life, to which Kant proposes to add "laughter," if the wit and originality of humour necessary to excite it among rational people were not so rare.

Well, I was fairly in for the evening's entertainment; and, to say truth, not altogether sorry for it. And, accordingly, our arrangements were perfected, and dinner ordered at an hour suitable to the time of the commencement of the performances, and we subsequently packed up and were on our road to the play house.

The building to which we had been attracted was but of "pretensions humble and dimensions small." The genteel accommodation consisted of four boxes on either side, and five in the front. The pit and gallery, when we arrived, might have boasted some five-and-twenty inhabitants. Three of the front boxes had in them some dozen of the bettermost neighbours, and our box and the stage-box opposite were well filled. On the stage, and before the curtain, stood a table covered with green baize, upon which were placed two candles, a bottle of water, and a tumbler, and a kind of desk; behind it stood a chair.

In those days, little was known of the extent to which amusement could be derived, and entertainment ensured, from so small a stock in trade; and, accordingly, we were not at all sparing in our jokes upon the unpromising appearance of things in general. Our attention, however, was attracted to the proscenium by the jingle of a piano-forte, concealed from sight, whereupon, at the ringing of a little bell, some hidden artist performed a somewhat familiar symphony, which was abruptly checked, like the story of the bear and fiddle, by a second similar "tintinabulary clatter."

Up rose the curtain, and displayed the scene of a room

and the end of the piano-forte, which we sagaciously conjectured was to be used as an accompaniment to the vocal effusions of the exhibiter. A momentary pause ensued, and the hero of the evening entered, dressed in a blue coat, white waistcoat, and black et ceteras:—he came forward, bowed to the “judicious few” who were present, and proceeded to take his place behind the table.

Philip Camerarius, in the seventy-third chapter of his “*Méditations Historiques*,” says, “That a person worthy of credit, who had travelled extensively in Egypt and Asia, told him that he, more than once, at a place near Cairo (whither vast numbers of people resort in order to witness the resurrection of the dead, as they say,) had seen corpses innumerable pushing themselves, as it were, out of their graves. “Not,” says he, “that I saw the bodies entire, but only their hands, sometimes their feet, and even half the body occasionally; but which, after having made these apparent efforts, gradually sunk back to conceal themselves again in the earth.”

“I,” says Camerarius, “being very much struck with this account, and scarcely able to credit it, made very particular inquiries on the subject of a most honourable and well-informed gentleman who had travelled in these countries in company with a very particular friend of mine, M. Alexander, of Schallenburg, and he told me that he also had heard of such things very frequently. That such strange appearances had been seen, and that no doubt existed as to the fact in Cairo itself; and in order to convince me the more entirely, he showed me an Italian book, published at Venice, called ‘*Viaggio di Messer di Giovanni di Alesandria nelle Indie*,’ in which there is a long and succinct account of one of those extraordinary resurrections which took place on the 25th of March, 1540, which curious spectacle lasted from Thursday until Saturday, when they all disappeared.”

Camerarius quotes much more from this curious book, the contents of which are corroborated by another traveller of the name of Felix, a native of Ulm, who published a work in German, containing precisely similar accounts. “As I do not undertake,” says Camerarius, “myself to maintain that these appearances are miraculous, and permitted even in these days for the purpose of overthrowing the idolatrous superstition of the Egyptians, and assuring them of the certainty of a resurrection and a life in the world to come, so I will not express my opinion that they are nothing but the illusions of Satan, as many are inclined

to think, but leave to the reader the task of exercising his own judgment and forming his own opinion."

Nevertheless, our author goes on to say, "That one Stephen Duplais, a goldsmith, a very intelligent and agreeable man, about five-and-forty years old, who had, when he was much younger, travelled in Egypt, told him that he had seen the same thing about fifteen years previous to their then conversation, in company with an apothecary from Chablia, of the name of Claude Rocard, and several other Christians, the party being headed and conducted by another goldsmith, of the name of Maniotti. He declared to me," says the Doctor, "that he and several of his companions actually touched the limbs of the revived corpses, and that he was on the point of laying hold of a child's head, which was rising out of the ground, when an Egyptian who was there called out, '*Kali, kali, ante matafardè,*' which means, 'Leave it alone, leave it alone, you do not know what it is you touch.'

"This gentleman," says our author, "told me that the tradition of this wonderful appearance has come down through father to son from time immemorial. The history which is told in relation to it is, that at some distant period a great concourse of Christian men, women, and children, were assembled in the exercise of their religion on this plain, when they were surrounded by their enemies, and cut to pieces, who, leaving the ground strewn with their mutilated bodies and limbs, returned to Cairo, and that ever since this resurrection has been visible for some days before and after the anniversary of the horrible massacre."

The statement of M. Duplais is again corroborated by Martin de Baumgarten, in his "*Travels in Egypt*," published after his death at Nuremburg, in the year 1594, who, in chap. xviii. of his first book, states that such appearances had been seen in a Turkish mosque near Cairo. This writer is however mistaken as to the scene of the vision, inasmuch as it was not a mosque, but a small eminence, which is not on the bank of the Nile, but at the distance of half a league from it.

Well, any body who reads my papers—if any body ever should—will exclaim, what of all this?—what on earth can this lively dance of death have to do with the Blissfold playhouse, or the agreeable entertainment of Mr. Delaville? and well he may; but let him pause in his exclamation, and understand that if I had been of the party with M. Duplais, the goldsmith, or M. Rocard, the apothecary, I could not

have been more astounded or astonished with what I might then have seen, than I was at what I beheld before me upon our little provincial stage.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said a voice, which, even if my sight might have been puzzled, never could deceive my ears,— "in presenting myself to your notice, I fear that perhaps I am—"—here the eyes of the vivacious exhibiter glanced on me.—I was gazing with astonishment at him: our looks met, and, to the infinite astonishment of the audience, he burst into a violent fit of laughter: the disorder, as it luckily happened, communicated itself to the whole company, and for a minute or two every body laughed, without knowing why or wherefore. The performer speedily resumed his composure, and went through a really entertaining part of his performance, which, although replete with copious quotations from Josephus Miller, and others of his erudite fraternity, was both spirited and amusing.

The moment the first part was over, I proceeded to the *Coulisses*; and there, having shaken hands with the genius of the night, expressed considerable astonishment that, as he must have known of my residence in the place, he had not presented himself at Ashmead. He explained to me, however, that he did not know of my being established in the neighbourhood, and that he had himself not arrived more than an hour before the beginning of the performance, and that his astonishment at seeing me a witness of his exhibition, threw him entirely off his guard, and produced the effect which seemed so mysterious to the "*general*."

That the performer was my once friend, once enemy, and since friend again, Daly, I need scarcely write down,—he had no time at that busy moment to give me any account of his adventures since we parted; but I made him promise to come up to breakfast on the morrow; and scarcely fancying the scene I had witnessed was real, I returned to my box to watch the progress and conclusion of the exhibition.

When we came back from the theatre, Wells and his two daughters proceeded to the rectory, and I to my home, having, however, received rather an unfavourable account of Tom, whose active cunning had been kept in full play, for the purpose of defeating all the attempts of his doctor and nurses in the way of medicine and regimen, and whose recent sulkiness had apparently been converted into practical irascibility by their efforts to control him.

This increased my anxiety to write to Cuthbert; and I resolved that if no letter arrived from him by the next day's post, and Tom continued to go on unfavourably, I would do



the *douce violence* to my feelings and transmit a report of existing circumstances under cover to the governess, a designation which appeared to me to be equally applicable as regarded her influence over my brother, or her tutelage of his hopeful favourites. When I got back I found Harriet progressing, as the Americans have it, most delightfully. Mrs. Wells' attentions were unremitting, and my gratitude was proportionably sincere. I mentioned that I expected a friend to breakfast, because, considering all the circumstances of my former acquaintance, connexions, and entanglements with Daly, it did not appear to me particularly desirable that any portion of the Wells family should be of the party. The information produced the anticipated effect; Mrs. Wells would breakfast in Harriet's room, and I should be left as I desired, *tête-à-tête* with my extraordinary companion.

Daly was punctual, as I expected; he had acquired the air and manner of a gentleman not at all likely to be too late for any meal to which he might happen to be invited; and I received him with a natural warmth not at all qualified by his change of appearance and station, but greatly mystified by finding him where and what he was, and I dismissed the servants as speedily as possible after the "things" were put down, in order to satisfy my curiosity upon the several most obscure points of his history.

"My dear fellow," said he, in answer to my first question as to the cause of his return from his African office, "I couldn't stand it. On my arrival in the infernal place, I inquired what *this* building was?—the *late* Governor's house—what *that* building was?—that was the residence of the *late* Collector of Customs. They told me the *late* Secretary was one of the most agreeable men in the world, and that if I had only arrived before the two Judges, the Colonial Chaplain, and the Deputy Inspector of Hospitals had died, I should have found it an admirably agreeable, and sweetly sociable circle of society.

"Well," said I, "but I suppose as these functionaries died off, others succeeded them?"

"Exactly so," said Daly; "and by that very course of procedure, I lost my appointment. As things were going, and as the people were gone, I thought I might as well die with decency, like Cæsar, as live lowly; so down I sat myself, and wrote a letter to my patron, petitioning for promotion. No reply. Out comes a new cargo of officers, civil and military; for the climate is so uncertain, or rather so certain, that they generally send out functionaries as they do despatches, in triplicate—and I not noticed—at them again

—made a grievance—complained of injustice—talked of my parliamentary interest in England—and wound up all, by distinctly stating that I would rather resign my office than continue to be oppressed.”

“What effect had *that*?” said I.

“Quite the reverse from what I intended,” said Daly; “a regular recoil—answer came, sure enough. What d’ye think it was? Two lines from an under-secretary—they had taken me at my word. ‘Have to acknowledge your letter—date so and so—stating so and so—and am directed by his Lordship to inform you that your resignation has been accepted—and Mr. Munjummy of Aldermanbury is appointed your successor.’ Having resigned, no passage was found me home—no pay there—so I have returned to my native land—which in itself is something—rather worse than I went, and have been forced to avail myself of my little trickeries which used formerly to delight the fashionable world in order to raise the supplies, and get to London with a few pounds in hand to keep the thing going till I can what we call turn round and look about me.”

“And does your scheme answer?” asked I.

“Never tried it but twice,” said Daly: “last night second appearance—you saw the result—as to finance, ‘a beggarly account of empty boxes’—as to the exhibition ‘flat, stale, and unprofitable.’ The absurdities of an amateur are always rapturously received; but the moment a man is called upon to pay for his pleasures, he becomes critical overmuch; and although he declares himself ready to die with laughing at some gratuitous absurdity in a drawing-room, he would pronounce the same performance, if he had to ‘fork out,’ as uncommonly dull, and deucedly dear at the money.”

“Why then it does *not* answer?” said I.

“It answers,” replied Daly, “very much as the under-secretary of state did—unfavourably to my view—so I mean to discard the dramatic and take to the literary line. I have already made a bargain with a London bookseller to commence to publish a couple of volumes of ‘Travels in the Interior of Africa,’ which I have written, and of which, to tell you truth, I have brought a specimen in my pocket: these things, they tell me, sell admirably well now; and with half a dozen views and the portraits of a chief or two, will, I have no doubt, fetch the bibliopole a pretty penny; at least he thinks so by his offer. Here is my specimen—I will leave it with you till I start, for I shall be off this evening.”

“And did you mean to have passed through Blissfold without paying me a visit?” said I.

"No," said Daly, "not exactly that; but I think if I had known you were established here, I should not have passed through Blissford at all: owing to my late arrival I was not aware of it; and most certainly, whatever your surprise last night might have been at seeing *me* as a performer, mine at beholding *you* as audience was at least equal."

The expressed intention of Daly to leave his interesting manuscript with me till he started, implied a return to Ashmead in the after part of the day, for which I was not altogether prepared. Not but that, even after all that had passed, I should have been too happy to give him board and lodging for an indefinite term—but he was so uncertain, so mischievous, and so uncontrollable, that I did not feel safe in permitting the possibility of his starting off into an elaborated detail of *all* the events of the preceding years of our acquaintance. I resolved, if possible, to guard myself from the effects of such indiscretions by pleading a dinner-engagement at the rectory; for it struck me that if I reduced my dinner at home, as I had already reduced my breakfast, to a *tête-à-tête*, he might, in the inevitable presence of the servants, indulge in some of those reminiscences, the very peculiarity of which would render them matters worth listening to, and make them valuable acquisitions to the archives of the housekeeper's room or servants' hall. Pondering, therefore, the least harsh mode of disentangling myself from a continuance of the unlooked for association with my friend, I asked him whether he had lately heard of his better half.

I cannot describe the sensations which I felt when making this inquiry, associated as it was with the recollection of events at once so overwhelming and absorbing to myself, and contrasted as those events and every thing connected with them were with the occurrences and pursuits of my present life. His answer was, that he had certainly heard of her, but the intelligence he had received was not of a nature to induce a belief that she was particularly interested in his fortunes or his fate.

"I should like your opinion on my manuscript," said Daly, with the pertinacious affection for his literary offspring so remarkable on the part of authors.

"And I should like to read it," said I; "but when do you leave this?"

"I fixed upon going this evening," said Daly; "but I am not tied to time—to-morrow will answer my purpose just as well."

7

This forced me into a declaration of my imaginary engagement.

"I am deucedly sorry," said I, "that I happened to have promised to dine at the rectory with my father-in-law, else I should have been delighted if you would have dined here."

I said those very words, and said them, too, with real sincerity and truth, merely making a conditional reservation, the cause of which was Daly's own imprudence. I *should* have been truly delighted to have had him to dine, *if* I could have trusted him. Thus the fault, in fact, was his, not mine; and, after all, the "being delighted" surely was not a less allowable *façon de parler* than "deeply regretting" the impossibility of accepting a disagreeable on account of a fictitious previous engagement; nor one bit worse than the absurdity of appending to a letter, in which one has indulged in the expression of the most contemptuous opinions and degrading epithets, the generally adopted formula—

"I have the honour to remain, Sir,

"Your most obedient very humble servant."

"But," continued I, "if you will trust me with a portion of the manuscript which you have with you, it shall be faithfully returned to you this evening; indeed, I will send it back to you when I go to the rectory."

"I think," said Daly, "you will find it interesting—very little of the interior is known, after all—but—if—as your literary talents are generally recognised—you should see any errors either in style or language, perhaps you would do me the kindness to use a correcting hand?—that's all."

I promised, disclaiming at the same time any of the qualifications which Daly ascribed to me—to read the book with all due attention, feeling, at the same time, a strong desire to make myself, in some degree, better acquainted with the state of my friend's finances. That they were low he had confessed, but I did not feel myself at liberty to inquire if I could be of any assistance, nor, indeed, did I doubt, considering all our foregone acquaintance, that he would hesitate to constitute me his banker, if he considered it necessary; still, there appeared in his manner a sort of restlessness and nervousness, which communicated themselves to me; and I felt, I scarce knew why—an immoderate anxiety for his departure.

I dreaded a visit from Sniggs while Daly was with me—he would not only recognise the lion of the preceding night, but would, no doubt, strike up an intimate acquaintanceship with him, and, by a sympathetic interchange of *facetie*, detain him at Ashmead, perhaps till luncheon—perhaps he might be the bearer of some message from Wells, whom I knew he was to see upon parish business at eleven, which might overthrow, in an instant, all my well-arranged history of my engagement. However, at last, after he had done ten thousand things, as I thought, purposely tending to delay his departure, Daly went, leaving me his manuscript, of which I considered it my duty to read a certain part, and, forming my judgment of the whole by some favourable sample, return it, as I had promised, before dinner.

I wished him farewell—begged him to write to me when he was fixed in London—and assured him of my perfect readiness to be of use to him whenever or however I might be able. Yet, when he was out of sight, I reproached myself with not having put my offer more explicitly, and volunteered some immediate assistance. The truth is, I was confused and worried, and thrown off my guard, and, I really believe, it would have been better not to have invited him at all to Ashmead, than have treated him as I did—without being able to avoid it.

When he was gone, I hastened to Harriet's room, and, as I never concealed a thought or a wish from *her*, explained to her the necessity I felt of avoiding Daly, by dining at her father's—an explanation scarcely necessary, because I had long before told her the whole history of my former adventures with him, even to the episode of my infatuation about Emma. My dear little woman perfectly agreed with me in my views on the subject, and I, accordingly wrote to the rector, to announce my intention, and received, as usual, a kindly welcome to his hospitable house. Having done which, I sat myself down to peruse the papers of my volatile friend, in order that they might be punctually restored to him before his departure, which, unencouraged by me to remain where he was, he had positively fixed for that evening, per mail, if there should be a place for him when it arrived.

I untied the packet, and, having skimmed the three preliminary chapters, which were occupied in describing the town in which he had been located, and its environs, its different institutions and offices, all of which I had previously read about, I passed on to the account of Daly's jour-

ney into a part of the interior, which, according to his statement, had never been visited before.\*

Daly, having travelled upwards of one hundred and sixty miles, without meeting with any considerable impediment, or remarkable adventure, arrived, on the 15th of April, at the town of Basfoodo, the residence of the king of the Gummangoes. He then proceeds with his journal:

"I was accompanied by my own servant, Richard Evans; Woolpoo, an intelligent negro, who had joined us at Mamfoz; Faz and Borjee, two boys; and a guide. At Basfoodo we were well received, contrary, as it appeared to me, to the expectations of my conductor. The king, a man of great intelligence, who spoke the Gummango language with peculiar sweetness, made numerous inquiries as to the objects I had in view. Woolpoo acted as interpreter: and, after an hour's talk, the king ordered me some Qualch, a dish made of horseflesh and melted butter. I contrived to eat some of it, because I was given to understand it was considered a great luxury, and, being sent by the king, it would have been thought disrespect if I had not partaken of it.

"I was conducted to a hut which had been prepared for me by the king's order, where there were several extremely large women waiting to give me tamarinds and rice, which they had brought with them. They were accompanied by five or six Pungahs, who appeared to be their daughters, who diverted me much by their grotesque dances. Oggenou Bow Ting, whom I soon discovered to be the king's favourite minister, told me that he had ordered plenty of milk-and-water for my horses; but when I ventured to express an intention of quitting Basfoodo early the next morning, he assumed a somewhat authoritative manner, and said, 'Betnot, betnot,' three or four times. The strong resemblance of his caution in the Gummango language to the English words, 'better not,' struck me as remarkably curious.

"In the morning, however, I took leave of the king, who seemed quite grieved to part with me; indeed, I could not prevail upon him to let me quit him, till I had soothed his

\* Since Mr. Gurney's papers were written, a vast number of lives have been lost in various attempts to penetrate into the interior of Africa, an object never to be attained, and which ought never again to be attempted, without a military force adequate to the protection of the brave and enterprising individuals who may be yet found willing to repeat the experiment.

regrets by giving him a double-barrelled gun, a gold-laced waistcoat, a cocked hat, and a musical snuff-box. His minister seemed to expect something for himself; but when I mounted my horse, and saw that he and two or three of the subordinates were making preparations to follow me, I repeated the word 'Betnot,' which he had himself used the night before, and they gave up the design.

"On the 18th we set out, and, although the road was stony, we reached Pagdouri by nine, where we breakfasted. This is a small village, on the side of a hill, on the banks of a clear stream. We had rice and milk for breakfast. About twelve we moved on gently. As we were proceeding, a young goat crossed our path, which had evidently strayed from its mother. Woolpoo advised our catching and killing it. This was accordingly done, and Faz was intrusted with the care of carrying it.

From this spot we could discover a very lofty ridge of mountains, ranging from N. E. to S. W. None of my companions could give me any information respecting them, except that they were called Bogieminicombo, which I believe to mean the Devil's small-tooth comb. I made a sketch of this wonderful chain, to which the reader is referred.

"About a mile beyond this, we met two women and three children. They seemed remarkably fond of their offspring. They offered us milk, and a composition which the natives call tatumaroo; its savour was not agreeable, and, not being able to understand exactly what it was made of, I declined it, but gave some glass beads to the children, and a Paris-made pincushion to each of the mothers.

"The soil here assumed a new appearance: it consisted of good red earth, with some flourishing vegetables. One old man showed us his garden, in which tobacco was growing. I plucked one of the leaves and nodded my head, which seemed to give him much pleasure.

"In the evening we reached Agabagadoo, a place of considerable importance, containing not less than two hundred and fifty inhabitants. Here we cooked our goat; and Woolpoo desired Waggumedd, an old chief to whom he was known, to desire one or two of his wives to get a warm bath ready for me, which they did, and I felt greatly refreshed by it;—indeed, nothing conduces more speedily to restore and re-invigorate a weary traveller than the warm bath.

"After supper we had some dancing to the sound of a drum, which is a hollow cylinder, over the top of which is

strained a piece of calf's skin. It is beaten on the top with one, and occasionally two, sticks which produce a hollow, but not altogether disagreeable sound. It lightened very much during the evening. I ate some tamarinds; and at nine we all retired to rest, but I could not sleep on account of the heat.

"In the morning I was better, and Woolpoo brought me some lapsuac, a dish made of minced fish and rice. The butter used in this country is a vegetable product, derived from the fruit of the Cé and Nédé. We travelled nearly eleven miles this day, and met a man of some importance, taking his daughter with him to Agabagadoo, as Woolpoo said, to be married. He had tied a rope round her left leg, and fastened it round his own waist. He appeared very much amused at our commiserating the poor girl's sufferings, and said 'Kinki, kokki, nogo,'—the precise meaning of which Woolpoo could not interpret, but which I understood to signify that if he had not taken the precaution we noticed, his Pungah would not have been induced to go the journey.

"This afternoon we crossed a pretty river, which Woolpoo informed me fell into a larger one, the name of which he did not recollect. The water was very clear; so that, not being deep, we could distinctly see the bottom in many places. I here noticed several fish swimming in the stream, which appeared to me very closely to resemble the *Gasterosteus aculeatus*; but I was unable to satisfy myself upon this point, from the rapidity with which they fled at our approach, and the difficulty of catching any of them—a circumstance which I deeply regret.

"At night we reached Fazelon, where he had a very comfortable supper of cushmakoo, composed of fowl boiled to rags, mixed up with oil, tamarinds, and a sweet jam, called suckee. I found this, when seasoned with pepper and salt, and well moistened with goat's milk, a remarkably nice dish.

"One of the Fushdous, or priests, came into our hut, and, having regaled himself, proposed to accompany us the next day, in order to point out to us the Pitsi Bow, or Sacred Well, which was consigned to his care; he left us late, with a promise to return early, but he did not make his appearance; and, when I awoke, I missed my silver snuff-box. I suggested to Woolpoo the necessity of applying to the chief of the village for restitution; but I was met again with the words 'Betnot.' So I put up with my loss with the best possible grace.



"Having lost my snuff-box, I was certainly not very favourably disposed towards the race of Fushdous, whom I subsequently found were not regular priests of the Hoggamogadoos, but a proscribed race who were constantly endeavouring to make a revenue for themselves by exhibiting the Pitsi Bow, and who were consequently glad to lay their hands upon any tangible object.

"Having waited for this faithless professor of what appeared to be an unorthodox sect, till the sun was nearly up, we recommenced our interesting progress. At Piliivinipou, a small town not remarkable for any peculiar feature, and containing about seventy-two inhabitants, we halted. The wind was westerly; wild roses and olives were seen during the morning, and Woolpoo showed me a mulberry, which, although unripe, was very satisfactory.

"On the 31st, Evans, my servant, was taken ill; we, of course, halted at Twiddeo, and every attention was shown him. The Pimsonso, or chief of Twiddeo, sent him some qualch, and I recommended him some Pulv.-Rad-Jalapii. Whether the horse-flesh or the medicine succeeded the better I cannot say. On the 1st Evans was convalescent, and, although several of the Bonjies of the place seemed quite satisfied that he must die, he was able to continue the journey mounted upon one of my she-asses.

"I certainly think I may with safety say that at the period at which I now write, I have achieved an object of the highest possible importance to all the civilized world. Woolpoo brought me to-day a man, evidently of deep erudition; for although I did not understand the Gorooga language (for we had now entered that most important kingdom,) he made me comprehend his meaning; and from him gathered, what I consider unquestionable evidence of the fact, that the river which I crossed nine days since was the Runamunaboo, and that (although Woolpoo then forgot the name of that to which it was a tributary stream) it actually falls into the great Pedee. This important fact, if properly substantiated, will infallibly settle the question as to the direction in which the Pedee runs. Subjoined is a map of the country through which these rivers flow, supposing my conclusions to be correct.

"The day after we left Twiddeo we reached the romantic town of Humshug, where we met with a very kind reception from the Bongeywag. Humshug is situate about fourteen miles N. W. from Calliwou—there is nothing particularly interesting in the *trajet*. I observed, however, several interesting specimens of *Alsine* and *Urtica*, of which I availed

myself, but which I regret to say I was not able to bring to England.

"I considered it necessary to give the Bongeywag some mark, not only of my personal esteem, but of the regard in which his character was held in England. I therefore presented him with a six-bladed Sheffield knife, and a cornelian necklace; he was much gratified, and insisted upon giving me several cocks and hens, and a goat.

"We took leave of Humshug with great regret, and, pursuing our way by the side of the river, or rather rivulet, Pewennee, reached the beautiful village of Fantod, just in time to accept of the hospitality of the chief, who not only treated me and my people with great kindness, but favoured me with a sort of vocabulary which I found of great use afterwards, and which I have thought it right in part to communicate to my readers.

" Humbo wag.	How do you do?
Pooley frou downwz.	Pretty well.
Swigglee mogou.	Give me something to drink.
Swinkee sou.	I am hot.
Mombro mullygrubou.	I am ill.
Tatifatitooroo.	Send for a Tackafee (doctor.)
Umbi widdéecou.	It rains.
Bumburirombleeboo.	Thunder.
Fiz.	Lightning.
Wadawantou.	How much do you ask?
Coodleadoo.	I love you.
Gitouto.	Go away.
Kisnicé.	A lover.
Rooretooro.	A wheelbarrow."

Having read so much of the vocabulary, I turned over a few pages, and came to this—"The next day we saw several goats, &c. —"

When I had read thus far, I felt, oddly enough, a somewhat powerful inclination to sleep; indeed it grew so strong, that the manuscript fell from my unconscious hand upon the table, and by its fall, awakened me to a "sense of my situation." I had already read the accounts of several similar expeditions, and had, I admit, uniformly felt the same symptoms; but as, by Daly's statement, he had disposed of the copyright of his work to an eminent London publisher, I felt rather ashamed this time of being unable to keep myself alive to its interest.

One thing in a considerable degree consoled me,—I

should not be obliged to deliver a *visâ voce* opinion of the production; nor, indeed, could I, with justice, give any opinion at all, since the chiefest merit of such a book consists in its correctness and truth. I accordingly refolded the manuscript, tied it up, and sealed it; and enclosing a note, thanking him for the perusal, which had given me much pleasure, directed it (as he desired) to Mr. Delaville, King's Head Inn, and having caused it to be deposited in the pony phaeton, proceeded, first to take leave of my dear Harriet and her amiable mother, and then to drive to the rectory, where I had no objection to pass half an hour before our family dinner.

Off I went, with my mind fuller of Cuthbert's neglect to my wife than any thing else, revolving also my scheme of writing the next day, if I did not hear; and thus occupied reached the well-known door of Wells's residence. I ordered the phaeton at ten; and while depositing my cloak in the hall, heard the billiard-balls at work. This satisfied me that Sniggs was to be of the party; so, directing James to leave the parcel at the King's Head, I entered the billiard-room, where I found the reverend rector acting marker at the fire-place, while Sniggs was struggling desperately to get up with Daly, *who was his antagonist, and had scored fourteen to nine of the game.*

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE astonishment which for a moment overwhelmed me at the sight of Daly, vanished in the next, when I recollected who the performer was, and what his character; indeed, it only served to assure me that his original and genuine spirit of enterprise, tolerably well exemplified by his public exhibition of the preceding evening, had been in no degree weakened or debased by his "foreign travel," but had rather come, from the purification of African heat, even stronger and brighter than it was when first submitted to that test.

"Capital player, Mr. Delaville," said Sniggs, who had put on his glasses to execute the delicate touches in which he excelled.

"I need not introduce you to my son-in-law," said Wells, to Daly.

"I flatter myself not," said Daly, continuing his play with an earnestness which convinced me he was not playing for love, which, in a sporting phraseology, means, *nothing*. "A cannon and red hazard—five—score me five, Domine—how much is that—nineteen to eleven—and a hard game—what are the odds? Chalk, Domine, if you please—I am going to give you the regular Phillimore screw."

"Domine!" said I, to myself; "has he already got upon such familiar terms with my reverend and revered Socer as to call him Domine?"

"There's a stroke, Mr. Sniggs," exclaimed Daly, after having, by dint of chalk and confidence, twisted the ball half round the table; "take your change out of *that*—now for the cannon, just so—two and three are five, and five and nineteen are twenty-four—at least in *my* country—game—thirteen and sixpence, Sniggy."

I stood amazed, wondering whether the "Domine" would order my facetious friend out of the house, or "Sniggy "

knock him down with the cue; but neither of these by *me* expected events occurred. Sniggs, who was certainly out of play, and seemed to me equally out of spirits, surrendered the implement of his art to Wells, who was to take up the conqueror.

"I am extremely glad you are come," said Sniggs to me; "I am beginning to get rather fidgetty about Tom. He has contrived not only to shirk taking any of the medicine which I made up for him, but has managed to make himself master of two bottles of cherry-bounce of Mrs. S.'s own manufacture, which were inadvertently left in a cupboard in his bed-room. The contents of one of these, and more than half of those of the other, he has swallowed. The result has been a terrible accession of fever, and occasional delirium, and his appearance is, I assure you, extremely alarming. I should have been at Ashmead now, if I had not heard that you were expected here at dinner."

"And is there any eventual danger to be anticipated?" asked I.

"It is impossible to say," replied Sniggs; "I have left him in the care of my young man, and I hope he may get a little rest; but there's no knowing what may happen if we are not able to overcome the inflammation."

"If any thing fatal were to occur," said I, "it would kill my poor brother; and then his being left here—and—"

"No blame can attach to *you*," said Sniggs: "you are strictly prohibited from visiting him."

Yes, thought I, that's very true; but blame attaches somewhere, and it is not very difficult to say where—the idea of leaving such a tempting potation within reach of the hopeful lad, whose love of any thing "black, sweet, and intoxicating" was remarkable, combined with his hatred of physic, and a determination to do all the mischief he could at the apothecary's house (his removal to which he considered a barbarous and degrading banishment) seemed to me preposterous. If his death should result from such negligence, it could scarcely be considered accidental or natural; and from the peculiar twist of Sniggs's countenance, I felt assured that however much he might try to conceal his real opinion of the case, it was in fact ominously unfavourable.

"I shall step home immediately after dinner," said Sniggs, "and see how he is going on. I told Mr. Tibbs to send the instant he fancied him growing worse; but by the evening we shall be better able to judge."

The intelligence of the worthy leech, and the tone in

which it was conveyed, filled my mind with serious apprehensions, and hindered me from making immediate inquiries as to the cause and manner of Daly's introduction and presence at the rectory. Wells was one of those liberal-minded men of the church who was ever ready to patronise merit in whatever profession he found it, and having known that I had gone behind the scenes to speak to Daly—or rather Delaville, for although he had breakfasted with me as Daly, he was at the rectory under his *nomme de guerre*—the invitation was probably the act of the rector himself. By whatever means it had been achieved, it was to me a most embarrassing circumstance, and I now regretted that I had not pressed him to stop and dine with me, which the willingness with which he had subsequently postponed his departure to dine with Wells, showed me that it was quite clear he would have done. I felt that I could have managed him so much better in my own house, and that Wells at Ashmead would have had fewer opportunities of making inquiries into his earlier life, and of giving him the opportunity of dilating upon our former intimacy, and the numerous curious circumstances and occurrences therewith connected. I had, in fact, outwitted myself: however, I do not think the most imaginative anticipator would ever have foretold the probability or even possibility of my finding my friend and foe, my “bane and antidote,” domesticated in my father-in-law's house, in less than four-and-twenty hours after his arrival in Blissfold, and addressing him and his companion by the affectionate epithets of Domine and Sniggy.

This event, which at any other time would have of itself sadly discomposed me, and made me wretchedly nervous, became, however, of secondary importance when I revolved in my mind the probable consequences of what I began to think would be the probable result of Tom's illness. From a false pride I had omitted writing to Cuthbert to give him an account of his health; and Cuthbert, in his love of ease, availing himself of the future opportunity of justifying his silence by a declaration that he had been waiting to hear from me, had pursued a precisely similar line of conduct.

Before I left home I had, as I have already recorded, resolved that, whatever my feelings about Mrs. Brandyball and her influence might be, all delicacy upon that point was to be overcome; and I had accordingly determined to write by to-morrow's post. What Sniggs had communicated rendered this duty doubly imperative: and the best thing I could do, under existing circumstances, would be

to delay till the last moment permitted by the post-office to forward my account of Tom, perfectly satisfied in my own mind, that let the consequences of the carelessness of Mr. or Mrs. Sniggs, or both of them, as the case might be, be what they might, they would be visited upon *me* to the fullest extent of Cuthbert's vengeance.

And to what might this not reach? It was true Cuthbert had made me, to a certain degree, independent, and I occupied a place in society which many men, greatly my superiors in rank and fortune, might reasonably envy, and which, at all events, enabled me to envy nobody; but all this comfort and enjoyment was—at least to a very considerable extent—derivable from, and dependent upon, the will and pleasure of my brother; at least, without meaning a pun, my present possession of it, was the result of his pleasure, and its permanency would entirely depend upon his will.

I was satisfied that if Tom should unfortunately die, that very circumstance would consummate Mrs. Brandyball's triumph. She would, of course, irritate Cuthbert, enlarge upon our inhumanity, and, in short, carry her great point of securing the entire guardianship and control of the girls; in order to do which, with the greater show of propriety and independence, she would unquestionably become the second Mrs. Cuthbert Gurney. That event would, with equal certainty, more especially considering the unfortunate incident which brought it about, divert the current of my poor brother's bounty and liberality into new channels, and I might suddenly find myself left with Ashmead on my hands, without the means of living in it, or keeping it up.

It may easily be imagined that with all these prospects for the future in my mind's eye, and the dread that Daly would indulge the company, in the course of the day, with details of the past, my position and feelings were any thing but agreeable.

"Tom," said Wells, "is, I hear, worse to-day?"

"Yes," said I, "I am deucedly sorry he is."

"Are you?" said Daly; "that won't do,—no, my dear Gilbert, I have heard the story—happen to know, as Hull says—never tell me that a man can be sorry for a fellow who is likely to stand in his way—nine to six"—still playing on. "I once knew a man, and a capital fellow too, who was in remainder to a title and a fortune, with nobody between, but a consumptive cousin of five years old—eleven to six—and what d'ye think he did, Sniggs?"

"Can't say," said Sniggs.

"Goes to the family apothecary—two more, that's thir-

teen—and says, ‘what a fine healthy boy that Ferdinand Alphonso is!’

“‘Healthy!’ cries the apothecary; ‘sickly, you mean?’

“‘On the contrary,’ cries the heir-presumptive, ‘I mean healthy.’

The apothecary shook his head.

“‘Well,’ said the heir-presumptive, ‘I tell you what I’ll do—you attend him constantly, and ought to know—but I’ll bet you a thousand guineas to one he is alive this day twelve-month.’

“The doctor jumped at the bet, and before six months were over, the Baron Ferdinand Alphonso was settled all safe and snug in the family vault, and the heir-presumptive in full possession.”

“Do you mean to say”—said Sniggs.

“Nothing,” replied Daly; “only that the medical man was the best judge, and was quite right in backing his opinion. Now, if Tom,—what d’ye call your invalid connexion?—were to fall in with a medical man, who entertained so bad an opinion of his case, I should say—pahaw! that’s a miss—score one—I should say betting the castor out would be very pretty sport.”

Wells looked somewhat surprised, and Sniggs appeared extremely indignant.

“La,” said Daly, “medical matters are often brought to bettings. Did you never hear the story of the fit and the bleeding—it’s as old as the Hills—not the Hulls—eh—Gilbert?”

“Not to my knowledge,” said I.

“Why, sir,” said Daly, “Will Witley, an old friend of mine, was standing one day at the window at White’s, and down he fell in a fit, as flat as a flounder. Sir Harry Liptrap offered three hundred to two that he would die. ‘Done,’ said Lord Bendamere. ‘Done,’ cried Liptrap. And done and done it was. The nearest apothecary had been sent for on the instant:—in he came post-haste—looked at Will—and whipped out his lancet in the twinkling of an eye—

“‘Mind what you are at, sir,’ said sir Harry to the doctor; ‘if you bleed *that* gentleman, and he recovers, you’ll pay my three hundred to Lord Bendamere. I backed Nature out at three to two; but I did not bet upon Art.’

“Whether the apothecary was frightened, or whether he bled the patient, I can’t say,” said Daly; “but Will Witley is alive and merry at this moment to tell the story, and the Jockey Club had to ‘settle the difference.’”

“Your humane suggestion,” said I to Daly, “at once so



gratifying to *me*, and so complimentary to Mr. Sniggs, it would scarcely be worth trying. The poor boy of whom we are talking is no heir-presumptive, nor does he stand in my way, except that by his death, if it should unfortunately happen, I am likely to lose whatever my poor brother might otherwise have been disposed to leave me in case of my surviving him. However, let us hope for the best."

A summons to dinner terminated the conversation; but I thought I began to perceive that Wells was not quite delighted with his new visiter, who had, it appeared, made good his landing, by having accosted the rector in the Blissfold library, and having proclaimed his old friendship for me, and a perfect recollection of my father-in-law's father, whom he said had been an intimate friend of his Uncle John's.

To *me*, perfectly acquainted as I was with my friend's "facilities," this ancient friendship was somewhat problematical; and when Wells was describing the circumstance of Daly's self-introduction to him—encouraged, however, by a good-natured recognition on the part of the rector—he evidently overheard us; and the twinkle of his eye, and the motion of his mouth, convinced me that Uncle John, if he ever existed, which, (as I never had previously heard of him,) I very much doubted, knew no more of our host's respectable father than I did.

Things, I must confess, all turned out badly upon this particular day. When Wells invited Daly to dine with him, he had not received a very curious letter from Lieutenant Merman, upon which he was desirous of consulting *me*, and which promised, under certain circumstances, very much to alter the position, and, eventually, the state of his daughter Fanny. I saw that his mind was occupied by some subject of importance, and that neither his playing nor marking was done attentively; and although I was not prepared to hear what he subsequently told me respecting the gallant officer's communication, I felt perfectly assured that his thoughts were not on what he was doing.

The consequence of all these "cross purposes," was, that Wells, instead of being cheerful and full of anecdote, "his custom always of the afternoon," was dull and restless, and neither encouraged Daly in his drolleries, nor laughed when he made an effort, and volunteered a joke. Sniggs was fidgety about Tom, and so was I, and the result was, *that which is by no means unfrequent in society*, the "merry men *all*," when brought together, were as dull and gentlemanly as possible.

One anecdote Daly gave us, which made Wells smile, but the rather, I believe, because he knew the hero of the tale; or, at least, the hero as Daly told it, for it did not appear to me quite impossible that my friend might have heard Wells speak of the reverend personage upon whom he fathered it. Sniggs had been describing the various *tracaseries* of poor Tom Falwasser during his confinement at his house, and amongst other things, told us that his restlessness was such that he never could get him to lie still, even when rest would be most advantageous.

"Now," said Daly, "that only shows the difference of dispositions; perhaps age has something to do with it—an old friend of mine, Doctor Doldrum, of Dorchester—rich—snug—snug incumbent of a fine fat living, and a bachelor, was regularly hunted by the old maids and widows of his neighbourhood. They were sure he would find a wife such a comfort.—His house only wanted a lady to take care of it,—and accordingly he was never left at rest upon this important topic.

"One, however, of these anxious creatures took the lead of the others; and when he once happened to be seized with a somewhat serious illness, resolved upon nursing him, which she did most assiduously—ay, and kindly too. He began to recover; but the listlessness of fever hung about him; and although his doctors ordered him to get up every day, there he lay, indolent and weak, and so he went on for a week or more, without once leaving his nest.

"Pray try and get up, doctor," said the attentive Mrs. Mantrap.

"I am too weak, ma'am," said the doctor; "I will try to-morrow."

"Fine day," said Mrs. Mantrap, "beautiful breeze—let Thomas wheel you into the garden?"

"I can't, ma'am," said the doctor; "I'm too weak."

"Do, doctor?"

"No, ma'am, no," said Doldrum.

"Dear me, dear me," said Mrs. Mantrap, losing patience with her patient, "will nothing make you get out of your bed?"

"No, ma'am," said the doctor, with a deep sigh and a look of despair—"nothing—except, indeed, your getting into it."

"This *brusquerie* broke off the acquaintance, and Doldrum died in a state of 'single blessedness.'"

This, however, I regret to say was, if not the first, the last bit of merriment of the day; for just as Daly had

finished his anecdote, looking himself as grave as a judge, a message from Sniggs' young gentleman, Mr. Tibbs, took him away before the time at which he had intended to go. We were—at least Wells and I—considerably agitated by the sudden manner in which the message was announced; and I—full to a certain degree of a kind of internal superstition—anticipated the worst.

Wells, who saw what was passing in my mind, and knowing that I was specially prohibited from even entering the apothecary's house, followed Sniggs, promising to bring me an authentic account of poor Tom's state; and thus, in no humour for such a scene, I was left for a short time *tête-à-tête* with Delaville Daly or Daly Delaville, whichever it best suited himself to be. "Sibthorpe Hopkins, or Hopkins Sibthorpe."

"Odd, isn't it?" said he, when Wells was fairly out of hearing—"deuced odd, that 'we should be both here together,' as the new song says? Wells is a capital fellow—liked him the moment I saw him—always have a respect for the cloth—especially when a dinner is in the way. You told me you were coming here; so, thinks I to myself, I'll just pave the way and meet him—did it in my best style."

"You seem to have done so," said I, in a tone and manner which must have practically convinced the yet untamed madcap that I had very materially altered my views of life and society.

"Never see a Domine," said Daly, "but think of the horrid tricks we used to play Carbo Cockletop, the curate of Cranberry, where I was at all the school I ever had—we called him Carbo because he looked like a Wallsend polished—devout but dirty, poor dear fellow! Amiable, confiding, dim-eyed, and dignified, if not in his profession, certainly in his manner; he had a fashion of throwing himself with a magisterial air backwards on the seat in the pulpit after his preliminary prayer. Upon that seat did I regularly do hen's work every Sunday."

"Hen's work?" said I, gravely, and really not comprehending him.

"Yes," said Daly—"hen's work. Every Sunday, there and upon that velvet cushion did I lay an egg, and as regularly did poor Carbo Cockletop carry on the process of incubation to a certain degree by sitting on it—falling gracefully upon his seat without looking before, or rather behind him, down he went—squash went the egg; and so absorbed was he in the might of his own majesty, that, like a heroic general in a different field of action, he never heard the

bursting of the shell, nor took any notice of the event. But when the sermon was over, and Carbo came down to make the amiable amongst his congregation, the effect of the squash upon the back of his shining canonicals was good—the field sable and the egg proper were beautiful heraldry; and homeward he walked, wholly unconscious of the absurdity of his appearance. And this I did seven consecutive Sundays with undiminished success.”

“Ah,” said I, “such things I could have laughed at once—but——”

“I perceive,” said Daly, “things are altered since I was behind the parson, and you have been before him; however, I am a Benedick too—eh?—thank your lucky stars!”

“I hope,” said I, “that your prospects will brighten. I am sure your book ought to secure you money and reputation. I only wonder how you, with *your* habits, could have undergone the fatigues and privations incidental to such a journey as that which you have so accurately detailed.”

“Fatigues!” said Daly; “privations!—why, my dear Gilbert, you don’t suppose I ever went to any of the places I describe—not a bit of it! I never was out of the infernal town, which, I wish to my heart, I never had been in, except as I remember my visits to Sir Frank Blazeaway, the commodore, in his frigate. Frank is as fine a fellow as ever stepped—fights like a devil, and drinks and plays as well as he fights.”

“My dear Daly,” said I, “all these things are very well in their way, but you ought to reflect.”

“What, as my looking-glass does when I shave,” said Daly, “to warn me how time creeps on—or rather gallops. No, I hate reflection, Gilbert. Sufficient to the day be the evil thereof; and although some great man, I forget his name at the moment—no matter—says, ‘He that never looks back will never gain wisdom enough to look forward,’ I go no farther than the present——”

“But, the book,” said I; “how do you reconcile the calling it your journey into the interior?”

“‘Tis mine, ’twas his,” said Daly, “and, I hope, will ‘be slave to thousands.’ I talked to a man who *had been* there, or somewhere else, and I read other men’s books of travels. I knew *they* had never been where they said they had been; and I consider a matter-of-fact detail, made off-hand, is a work of infinitely greater ingenuity than the common-place report of an actual journey. Rely upon it, my Quaalch will become a fashionable dish before a twelve-

month is over our heads, and I shall be lionised all over London for having caught a glimpse of the Bogieminnicombo Mountains, which never were discovered, and having ascertained the direction in which a river that nobody ever heard of does not run."

"I hope you may, but——"

"Oh," said Daly, "you are skeptical—you have pulled up and are steady—I must continue dashing at something. True, my creditors are not dead, but they must be pacified. I can't kill myself a second time, and 'take the benefit of the act'—I mean of innocent suicide—the knob on my nose is too well known now. Still, *nil desperandum* is my motto; and I back myself three to two, like the winner at White's, that I fall on my legs—at least as long as I have a plank left to stand upon."

"Exactly so," said I, not forgetting what I had seen some years before at the Old Bailey; "but now," I continued, really anxious about him, and feeling rather glad that I had an opportunity of offering him some assistance, which I had not done in the morning, "what do you really and seriously propose?"


His answer was checked by the return of Wells, the expression of whose generally cheerful countenance told me better than words, that matters looked badly with the invalid.

"The boy is dying," said Wells; "he is delirious, and Sniggs is convinced an effusion on the brain will take place. Nothing can be worse."

"Nothing, indeed," said I. "This will be a dreadful blow upon us all; and, to say truth, I do not think, when the case comes to be looked into, that Sniggs will get much credit on the score of carefulness, in allowing such a patient access to strong spirits like cherry brandy."

"Especially," said Daly, who would rather lose ten friends than one joke, however good the one, and however bad the other—"especially a boy whose addiction to *bounce* was notorious."

"Ah, Mr. Delaville," said Wells, "those who have never suffered an affliction of this sort may jest upon it: for my part, I am sure you will forgive me; I had hoped to pass an agreeable day and evening with you and my son-in-law; but this most unexpected calamity presses upon us dreadfully, and I think that Gilbert and I ought to go to Ashmead, where the news, if any thing fatal *does* occur, would perhaps abruptly reach his wife, and produce the most serious consequences."



"I agree with you," said I to Wells: "and I am sure, my dear Daly——"

"Daly!" said Wells. "Delaville, I thought."

"Ay," said I, "his travelling name; but——"

"Daly!" repeated the rector, somewhat emphatically. "Surely you are not *the* Mr. Daly of whom I have heard Gilbert so frequently talk?"

"The same in *propria personâ*," said Daly, making a theatrical bow, "and very much at your service."

I saw that the rector was very much surprised, and fancied that he was a little angry. This vexed me; because I feared that I should be implicated as a party to the deception with regard to my *friend's* assumed name. However, as I had neither brought him to the rectory, nor invited him thither, but, on the contrary, had left my own house in order to avoid him; I felt, also, that I could explain away my share of the business during our walk to Ashmead; upon which Wells seemed more positively resolved, after discovering whom his guest really was, than he was before.

"I shall make no apology, Mr. Daly," said Wells, "for wishing you a good evening: so old a friend of my son-in-law will, I am sure, not require ceremony."

"Assuredly not," said Daly. "I will just top up with one glass of sherry, and betake myself to 'mine inn,' extremely glad to have seen Gilbert happy, and to thank you for your hospitality." Saying which, he rose from the table, Wells rang the bell, and, having cordially shaken hands with both of us, the unreformed wag was, in a few minutes, clear of the house.

## CHAPTER IX.

"I HAD no idea," said Wells, when Daly was out of hearing, "that our entertaining mimic was your redoubtable friend, of whom you have so often spoken: if I had—and I wonder almost that you had not told me—I don't think I should have asked him here."

"My motive," said I, "for not saying any thing about him was my desire not to betray him under his disguise; but most certainly I did not expect to find him your guest."

"The deuce you did not!" said Wells. "Then he must be rather a sharp hand. He came up to me in the library, told me had breakfasted with *you*, and that you regretted your engagement to *me*—of which I then knew nothing—because it would keep you from him; and all this he did so plausibly, and so coolly, that he made me understand, without directly saying it, that you wished to dine here instead of at Ashmead, in order to keep the house quiet, and that, moreover, your plan was that I should ask him to meet you."

"Well," said I, "give him the full credit for his ingenuity, and believe that I was perfectly innocent of any such conspiracy, and never was more surprised in my life than when I found him here."

"Never mind," said Wells; "I wish we had not such good, or rather bad reasons for driving him away. Gilbert, rely upon it, that boy will not get over it."

"I fear not," said I.

"We had better prepare poor Harriet for the possibility of his death," said Wells; "and, moreover, I am anxious to see her mother. I have had a very extraordinary communication from the lieutenant touching his affair with Fanny, of which I do not exactly understand the meaning."

"Come," said I, "let us be going;" and we mechanical-

ly proceeded to prepare for our walk to Ashmead, both of us occupied with a variety of feelings of the most unpleasant character.

During the *trajet*, however, Wells imparted to me some particulars of his difficulties; for he was now struggling between an anxiety to promote his daughter's happiness, and a determination to support what he called the dignity of her character.

That Lieutenant Merman was attached to Fanny there could be no doubt,—at least as much attached as an abrupt, iron-nerved man, wholly devoid of delicacy, or that sort of feeling which I hold to be essential to true love, could be; and although particularly disagreeable to me, there could be as little doubt that Miss Fanny Wells was extremely well disposed towards him. The avowed want of fortune on the part of the young lady exonerated him in her eyes from any imputation of interested motives in his affection, and his implicit belief that his aunt would make him her heir, fully justified his persisting in attentions which he all along proposed to carry to an honourable conclusion.

So far all was well; nobody could find fault, and certainly, least of all, Wells, to whose notions about marriage I have so often referred. The truth was, that when the lieutenant found that his inheritance was saddled with a condition, he preferred the money with the incumbrance, to subjecting himself to incumbrances without the money.

“But the lieutenant and his aunt had reckoned without their host. Merman, when he had explained the position in which he was placed, by the pertinacious affection of his aunt, Miss Maloney, and had, in fact, broken off the affair with Fanny, proceeded to the old lady, the source of all his future prosperity, and was most cordially received; his prompt appearance in answer to her summons practically evincing his readiness to fall into her arrangement.

“‘Dear Philip,’” said his aunt, “‘you will find Millicent Maloney a very charming young woman. I am extremely sorry that you have seen so little of her, but your being quartered in England, and our living in Ireland, have kept you too long apart. My plan of settling you together is not one of to-day, but I had my reasons for not communicating it to you in direct terms before. The moment you told me your intentions of proposing for another young lady, I felt it necessary to open my heart to you.’

“‘I wish,’ said the lieutenant, ‘it had so happened that I could have been aware of your views before—for really



Miss Wells is a nice girl; and I have got so completely habituated to the ways of her family, that it is painful to myself not to speak of its being rather unfair to *her*, to break off such an engagement. That, however, isn't much, because I fairly told her father, it would be madness in me to marry her without adequate means for her support—the wife of a subaltern, with, perhaps, half a dozen children, destined to be stowed away in a bare-walled den in barracks, or cooped up in country quarters in a two-windowed drawing-room over a chandler's shop, ought not to be taken from the quiet comforts of such a house as Blissfold rectory. If I had the means——'

"'Ay, ay,' said the aunt, 'but you have not the means, Philip. All I want you to do is to see Millicent—her father was one of the handsomest men that ever stepped; he was, as you know, one of your honourable profession, and Millicent is naturally attached to those who, like yourself, belong to it.'

"'And her mother?' said Philip—

"'Ay, that's the question.'

"'Her mother,' said the aunt, 'was a young lady of good family—it was a runaway match. I knew her well—intimately—poor girl, she died within a very short time of Millicent's birth, who, consequently, never knew a mother's care. Her death happened at a time when I had gone into the country for the benefit of my health; and I had the melancholy satisfaction of being with her when she breathed her last. Her husband had been ordered abroad about two months before the event, which she survived only five weeks. I promised her to be a mother to her child. I brought the baby home to my father's house when I returned—brought her up carefully—and, when old enough, sent her to school; and, as you know, when my father died and I went to live in Ireland, she accompanied me, and, in fact, has never left me since.'

"'Your kindness has been remarkable,' said Philip, making a sort of sniff with his nose, which sounded more significant than genteel.

"'Is it not natural, then,' said his aunt, 'that, meaning to leave every thing I have to those most dear to me, I should wish you, who have a natural claim upon me, to unite yourself to her to whom I am so much attached? Thus the amount of what I leave would be jointly yours,

and I should see you settled and happy before I quitted this transitory life.'

"'Nobody would venture to impugn your kind intentions,' said the lieutenant; 'all I presume to complain of is my not having been earlier made acquainted with them—her father ——'

"'Oh,' said Philip's aunt, 'her father never returned to England.—He died in the West Indies in half a year after his departure.'

"'And is Miss Maloney now here?' said Philip, who saw lying about the room, harp-strings, and colour-boxes, and work-boxes, and odd volumes of novels, a song or two, some netting, and knotting, and knitting-needles, and sundry other similar indications of the presence of a young accomplished female.

"'To be sure she is,' said the aunt; 'I only wanted to put you *au fait* before I introduced you to her—here is her picture, and an excellent likeness too.'

"Philip looked at the miniature which she proffered, and beheld a countenance full of animated expression, with a pair of eloquent eyes, and a witching smile upon the lips, which, taken in conjunction with a figure that, as far as it went in the picture, was perfectly symmetrical, instantly superseded the less classical beauties of the deserted Fanny Wells in the mind of the lieutenant.

"'This,' said the lieutenant, 'this is very lovely, though! But I tell you what, aunt—don't suppose I mean to flatter you—but upon my life there is something in the expression of the mouth that reminds me very much of *you*.'

"'ME!' exclaimed the aunt: 'what a notion! Compare *me*, at forty-one, with that blooming creature of nineteen! Philip, Philip, Philip, you are dreaming. No, no! I never was so handsome as that. No, she takes after her father more than after her mother.'

"'If Miss Mellecent ——'

"'Millicent, my dear Philip,' said the aunt.

"'I never know,' said Philip, 'how to pronounce that name.'

"'Why,' said the aunt, who was a wag in her line, 'in the present case you may pronounce it either way—

'You may call her Milliecent on account of her money,  
'Or Mellecent, because she's as sweet as honey.'

There's for you!

"'I am delighted to see you in such spirits, aunt,' said the lieutenant; 'now tell me when am I to be presented!'

"'As soon as you have dressed for dinner,' said the aunt. 'First impressions go a great way, and I want her to like you at once.'

"As for myself, if I had been there I should speedily have abandoned all hopes of success by a *coup de main*. Merman was decidedly no beauty, and if he were destined to win a heart it must be by the exercise of that most perilous of all man's members, the tongue: however, the lieutenant did not think so, and, accordingly, acting upon the suggestion of his worthy relation, who had proved herself so much attached to him, and so careful of his interests, bestowed a double share of pains upon the completion of his toilet.

"Miss Pennefather—or, as she was beginning to call herself, Mrs. Pennefather—dined early—five o'clock—and in the summer a drive or a stroll in the cool of the evening was the order of the day. As it was, and while stern winter bound fair nature in his icy chains, Millicent would endeavour to make the fireside agreeable—she would sing to him—for she sang divinely. She would show him her drawings, for she drew beautifully, and then at some more genial season when—

"The sun had chased the mountain snow,  
And kindly loosed the frozen soil,"

she would stroll with him by the banks of the beautiful river which rolled its silver tide under the terrace at the end of the flower-garden, and point out to him the beauties of the verdant valley which lay at their feet. All this, it must be confessed, was well calculated to eradicate from his memory the less showy qualifications of my poor sister-in-law, and teach him to forget the humbler laurel walks of hospitable Blissfold.

"Within a few minutes of five, the lieutenant paraded himself in the drawing-room of Mrs. Pennefather's perfect Paradise, at the end of which was a large looking-glass, in the which the lieutenant kept continually gazing at himself, improving all his good points; twisting his hair into curl, settling his neckcloth, arranging his waistcoat, and all the rest of it, until his dear relation made her appearance, looking, it must be confessed, exceedingly handsome, and evidently not dressed as a foil for her jewel of a niece.

"'I thought,' said she, 'we should be better without strangers to-day; so we shall be quite alone.'

"'So much the more agreeable,' said the lieutenant.

"'Dinner is on the table,' said the butler.

"'Good news,' said the lieutenant.

"'Does Miss Maloney know we are waiting?' said Miss Pennefather.

"'I'll inquire, madam,' said the man, and retired.

"'Come, Philip,' said the aunt, 'we are at home, and I hope you feel we are; so come. Millicent will join us in the dining-room.'

"And, with a coquetish air of gallantry, she extended her arm to her nephew, in order that he might offer his, *en cavalier*; and away they went across the hall; and the dinner smelt savourily.

"Just as the happy pair were about to seat themselves, the butler returned with news that Miss Maloney was not in her room.

"'Oh, then,' said Miss Pennefather, 'she has probably gone into the library. Tell Gibson to go and find her.'

"'Gibson isn't in, ma'am,' said the butler.

"'Why, who dressed her, I wonder?' said the aunt. 'She could not have dressed without her maid.'

"'Miss Gibson hasn't been in since the morning,' said a tall, white-faced footman.

"'What's the meaning of this?' said Miss Pennefather.

"'Nobody knew; every body looked. Some looked wise, some looked foolish.'

"'I'll go to her room myself,' said Miss Pennefather. 'Excuse me, Philip, for a few minutes. This is mighty strange; I can't comprehend it.'

"The lieutenant was in a very awkward position, standing in the middle of the dining-room, exposed to the gaze of the servants, who had heard a week before, from Miss Gibson, the cause of his intended visit.

"'Thomas, put the covers on again,' said the butler; and the dinner vanished from the longing eyes of the hungry soldier.

"A loud scream just at this instant rang through the house. The maid-servants scrambled up the stairs; and when they reached Miss Millicent Maloney's bed-room, they found their amiable mistress, Miss Laura Pennefather, in a violent fit at the foot of the bed."

Wells had just reached this point of his narrative when we arrived at the gate of Ashmead: after we had entered

the house he thus continued his account of the proceedings at Aunt Pennefather's.

"No sooner had the amiable mistress of the house recovered from her fainting, which held for some time, and was eventually overcome by the application of hartshorn and Eau de Cologne, the burning of feathers, the sprinkling of water, and all the established remedies recommended by the Humane society for the restoration of hysterical ladies, than she screamed out the name of Millicent Maloney, in a tone emulating that of a peacock in anticipation of rain; but, although she had regained the use of her voice, her intellectual faculties continued in a lamentable state of obfuscation—her eyes rolled in every direction—her fists remained clenched—and the first coherent phrase which the anxious attendants could understand was this, 'Who the d—l is it with?'

"Then it was the maid-servants looked at each other—then it was they began to feel a confidence that their suspicions were well founded, and that something very extraordinary had happened to Miss Millicent Maloney.

"'Where is she?' said the recovering Pennefather—'where is she?—I ask you all, where is she?'

"'She?' said one.

"'Where?' said another.

"'Where is who?' cried a third.

"'Millicent—my child Millicent!' said Miss Pennefather.

"'Child!' said Mary.

"'Child!' exclaimed Jenny.

"'Child!' reiterated Susan.

"'Yes,' faltered out Miss Pennefather—'my child—my niece—my young friend!'

"'The last time I saw her, ma'am,' said Susan, 'was a-going down the garden, just by the ewe-trees, towards the summer-house.'

"'When was that?' said Miss Pennefather.

"'About ten o'clock this morning,' said Susan.

"'Pshaw! Ridiculous!' said her mistress. 'Didn't she lunch with me at half-past one?'

"'I only said——'

"'Stuff! Nonsense!' exclaimed the lady. 'Lift me up—raise my head. Where's Philip? Where's the note? Oh, here. What on earth shall I do—what shall I do?'

Hereabouts the unfortunate lady relapsed into a state of insensibility, and the note which she had previously clenched

in her hand, and about which she evinced such earnest solicitude, fell from her grasp.

" 'Susan,' said Mary, as it tumbled on the floor.

" 'Mary,' said Susan, nodding her head.

" 'Susan,' said Jenny—' I say——'

" Whereupon they began signalling to each other, to take advantage of their mistress's 'absence' to inform themselves of the contents of the billet. The sympathies of mischief and curiosity combined were at work, and, without the waste of another word, the domestic Graces of the unconscious Venus were busily occupied: one in greedily swallowing with her eyes the intelligence so anxiously coveted, and the other two grouped so as to prevent Miss Pennefather seeing what was going on if she should happen suddenly to open her swain-killing eyes.

" Susan took upon herself the active and responsible part of the performance, and picking up the note, which they knew to be of Miss Maloney's writing, read, *sotto voce*, what follows:—

" 'MY DEAREST FRIEND,

" 'Your constant and long-continued kindness to me makes it doubly painful to me to take the decided step which, nevertheless, I have resolved upon. I would not for the world oppose your wishes or incur your displeasure; but the crisis is at hand, and therefore I am forced to act promptly. My heart is so devotedly attached and so immutably engaged to another, that it would be worse than hypocrisy even to permit your nephew to be introduced to me in the character of an avowed lover. In cases such as these, discussions only excite and promote angry feelings. I have made my own decision, and will abide by it, let what may be the consequences. Before this reaches you I shall have placed my fate beyond the chance of alteration—two days hence you shall have farther particulars. In the mean time assure yourself that I am safe and happy, and always affectionately yours,

" 'MILLCENT MALONEY.'

" 'That's it, is it?' said Mary, rubbing her mistress's temples with Eau de Cologne.

" 'That's it,' rejoined Jenny, as she chafed her mistress's hands; 'and a pretty it, it is, too.'

" 'Can you guess who?' whispered Susan.

" 'Hush! Hem!—do you feel yourself a little better, ma'am?' said Jenny, finding Miss Pennefather 'coming to,' as she called it.

" 'Jane,' said Miss Pennefather, gasping for breath; 'I never can be better. Tell me, where's the note?'

" 'Where's the note, Susan?' said Jane.

" 'What note?' said Susan.

" 'Do you mean that bit of paper doubled up, down there?' said Mary.

" 'Yes, child, yes!' said Miss Pennefather; 'that's it; give it me. Do you know any thing at all about it?'

" 'It, ma'am!' said Mary.

" 'What, ma'am?' said Susan.

" 'What do you mean, ma'am?' said Jenny.

" 'Why, about Miss Millicent's going off,' said Miss Pennefather.

" 'Off!' exclaimed Susan.

" 'Going!' cried Mary.

" 'Going off!' screamed Jenny.

" 'Off!' repeated the lady. 'This note tells me that she has left me—fled—run away, in short. But can nobody guess who the man is?'

" 'Man!' exclaimed the three maids at once.

" 'Yes—man!' said Miss Pennefather, emphatically. 'She is gone away with a man.'

" 'Dear me!' said Susan.

" 'Oh dear!' cried Jane.

" 'Oh, bless me!' said Mary.

" 'Have you seen nobody about the house lately?' said Miss Pennefather.

" 'No,' was the general reply, with an exception made by Susan, of John Bartram, the old man known as the 'helper,' and who did all the work of all the regular servants.

" 'Nonsense,' said the lady. 'Oh, no, no; there is some fly-away Irishman in the case, I have no doubt. Just like her mother—no care—no thought. What am I to do with my poor nephew? What am I to say? How am I to excuse myself? I can't dine—I can't sit up. Susan, go and tell Simmons to give my love to Mr. Philip, and say I am too unwell to go down to dinner; beg him to dine, and—but then what will *he* think? You had better let Simmons tell him—no, go yourself—go yourself, and explain why I cannot dine with him. Say I shall, I hope, be better in the evening, and will talk over matters with him, and—if he should ask about Millicent, why—you know what I have told you, and so—make him understand—break it to him—it is better than trusting Simmons—besides, I cannot tell him myself. Oh, Millicent, Millicent—foolish, head-strong girl!'

"Susan, of course, obeyed her mistress's commands, although the mission to which she was appointed was, in fact, one of considerable delicacy and no little difficulty. Susan, who was an extremely pretty black-eyed girl, took the precaution, before she proceeded to the interview with the Lieutenant, to run into Miss Pennefather's dressing-room in order to give her jetty ringlets a fresh twirl round her finger, and settle the little fanciful cap which she wore on her head. It is impossible to trace the exact current of female minds; but, however absurd it may appear, Susan, at the moment, felt the possibility of such a thing happening as the Lieutenant, being in the extremity of his despair for the loss of the mistress, drawn suddenly into a violent admiration of the maid.

"Susan's heart fluttered terribly as she approached the dining-parlour in which Merman had been "left alone in his glory;" Simmons having taken the precaution of having the 'soup and fish' taken back to the kitchen to wait for farther orders. Susan tapped at the door—a precautionary habit sedulously inculcated in all decent families—the "come in" of Lieutenant Merman brought her face to face with that distinguished officer.

"When the door was opened, Merman was discovered standing with his back to the fire munching the piece of bread which had been deposited on the side of his plate, and which, in the then ravenous state of his appetite, he could no longer resist.

"'I beg your pardon, sir,' said Susan, dropping a sort of theatrical half-courtesy, 'but my mistress begs you will not wait dinner for her. She will come down in the evening, when she hopes to be better.'

"'And Miss Maloney?' said Merman, inquiringly.

"'Why, sir,' said Susan, colouring deeply, 'Miss Maloney, sir,—is—that's it, sir——'

"'It!—what?' said the Lieutenant.

"'Why, sir,' said Susan, 'that's the reason my mistress is not well enough to come down.'

"'What?' again said the soldier.

"'Miss Millicent, sir, is gone out.'

"'Gone out!' said Merman.

"'Yes, sir.'

"'What, in the snow?'

"'I don't know, I'm sure, sir,' said Susan; 'but—she is gone.'

"'Alone?' said Merman.

"'I can't say, sir,' said Susan; 'but my mistress seems to think not.'



"Are we to wait till she returns?" asked Merman.

"Oh dear no!" said the maiden. "I believe, if you were, you'd have to wait a long time."

"What do you mean?" said Merman. "Come here: tell me—is Miss Maloney gone on a visit, or——"

"No, sir," said Susan: "don't be angry, sir; we all know what you are come here for, and so did Miss Millicent, and so, sir,—don't tell my mistress that I told you all,—Miss Millicent has run away with somebody else;—don't be in a passion, don't."

"Passion!" exclaimed the Lieutenant. "I don't see why I should be in a passion. I never saw her, and therefore couldn't care much for her. Now, I am free to choose whom I like."

"That's very true, sir," said Susan, biting her lips to make them redder than usual. The look which the pretty girl put on immediately reminded the Lieutenant that he was treating her more confidentially than, considering their relative positions, was either necessary or becoming, by expressing in so unreserved a manner the satisfaction which he felt at the defection of his intended wife.

"My mistress begs you will eat your dinner, sir," said Susan.

"I'll endeavour," said Merman; "but give my love to her, and ask her if I may send her something; and—will you tell the butler that I'm ready."

Susan bobbed an assenting courtesy, and left the room perfectly satisfied that her mistress's nephew was not likely to die for love, at least upon the present occasion."

It turned out in the sequel that Miss Millicent Maloney had left her heart in the Emerald Isle, and that the gentleman who had it in his keeping had been summoned to England as soon as Miss Laura Pennefather had expressed her determination with regard to Merman. There was nothing objectionable about the lady's favourite, except that worldly blemish—a want of fortune. And all Merman's present anxieties were directed to the immediate conclusion of his affair with Fanny Wells, while his aunt's irritation of feeling towards Millicent continued, fearing, naturally enough, that time and her natural affections would soften her anger and relax the resolution which she had in her rage announced to him, of cutting her off entirely. Here, however, the light infantry officer was defeated: Laura could forget and forgive, or rather it may be said she forgave because she could not forget; and, at the termination of the Lieutenant's visit, his aunt gave him to understand that if she remained

in her present mind, as to Millicent's conduct, he would, at her death, receive a moiety of the sum intended for him if his marriage with Millicent had taken place.

This made a vast difference in his position. The diminution of the amount of his expected fortune by one-half,—the contingency, too, by which he was to run his military life against that of a quiet, moderate lady of regular habits and a good constitution, were serious drawbacks: he certainly loved Fanny better than any body else, except himself, and considering the fortune he was to look to, in conjunction with her charms, and hating the notion that she would very soon find out if he did not marry *her*, that he had been rejected by Miss Maloney, he sat down and wrote to Wells, giving his own version of his expedition, and begging to be allowed to return to his old quarters, and offering himself, such as he was, for the acceptance of his daughter.

It was in this position of affairs that Wells sought my advice and an opinion whether considering that Merman had actually retired, and gone avowedly to marry another woman, Fanny could, consistently with the dignity of her character, receive him again, and consent to become his wife, because the other lady would not have him.

The point, I admit, was one of considerable delicacy, but as far as I could see, or indeed suggest, it seemed to me most particularly to rest upon Wells's objection to the change of fortune, and Fanny's feelings towards the Lieutenant: at all events, my proposition was, that if Wells was himself not hostile to the marriage for financial reasons, Fanny should be left entirely to herself, to decide according to her wishes and inclinations.

Mrs. Wells was outrageously indignant at the proposition, which she considered in the light of a downright insult, and did not hesitate to appropriate to the absent officer the epithets of "fortune-hunter," "coxcomb," and impudent fellow." Fanny, however, did not join in the cry against him, but maintained that all he did was perfectly disinterested, and that he had consented to give her up only to save her from the necessity of making sacrifices, and exposing herself to difficulties and inconveniences which she was even yet ready to encounter for the sake of her dear Philip. With great dutifulness, however, she declared her willingness to be guided entirely by her father, a proof of her obedience which I confess lost some of its merit in my eyes, from her knowing which way it was most probable the rector would decide, when there was a prospect of marrying off a daughter.

## CHAPTER X.

THINGS were thus proceeding, when, having forewarned poor Harriet of the dangerous state of Tom Falwasser's health, I anxiously awaited the arrival of intelligence from Snigga. With the morning came worse accounts of the boy, and by the post came the following letter from his eldest sister:—

*“Montpelier, Bath.*

“DEAR UNCLE.—Pappy is most anxious to hear about Tom, and wondered why you did not write; but when I told him you did not know where to direct to him, he was quite satisfied: pray let him hear about my brother. Pappy has got the pretty cottage Mrs. Brandyball talked of next to our school, and seems very happy. Mrs. Brandyball is very attentive and kind to him, and very good to us; indeed, neither Jane nor I do any thing but what we please. We are mostly in at the cottage, for Pappy likes us to be as much with him as we can. Pappy says that when Tom gets well he is to come to us here, and then perhaps after the Easter holidays we shall all go to some other place, for I should not be very much surprised if our governess was to give up her school. Pappy says it must be so fatiguing to her, and thinks that she would have quite enough to do to superintend the education of me and Jane.

“I hope dear aunt and the little boy are quite well, and dear Fanny and Bessy. I should be delighted to hear from the latter. Give my love, and Jane sends hers. Pappy desires to be kindly remembered, and hopes you will let him hear soon.

“Yours, dear Uncle, affectionately,  
“KATE FALWASSER.”

I was not in a humour to think much about myself when

I received this despatch, for my mind was fully occupied with the fate of poor Tom; but certainly, as the communication—by proxy—of an affectionate brother, the self-proposed godfather of my child, his infant nephew, never was any thing less satisfactory. To have expected Cuthbert to exert himself to the extent of favouring me with an autograph letter might have been too much, but to find no word, no syllable from him, referring in the slightest degree either to my wife or child, or to his intentions respecting his sponsorial proposition, nor indeed any hint even tending to make me fancy that I occupied the smallest share of his attention, was beyond my anticipations. That it was painful I admit, and if I had been in a state to dwell upon it, it would have awakened a thousand feelings, which perhaps it was as well should not be called into play. It was evident that Mrs. Brandyball's influence was rapidly increasing, and the artless manner in which Kate mentioned the probability of that *amiable* lady's giving up the fatigue of general tuition, to devote her time and talents to the exclusive improvement of my two half-nieces, convinced me that all my worst apprehensions were eventually to be realized.

To Harriet I merely communicated the fact that I had heard from Cuthbert—for I could not venture to apprise her of the nature of his letter. She, dear soul, was so full of kindness, so feelingly alive to my interests, and had devoted herself so entirely for *my* sake to *him*, that I was sure she would feel deeply and bitterly the tone and spirit of Kate's letter. In fact, I do not think, since the day of my beloved mother's death, (a day always present to my memory,) I ever felt so perfectly miserable as on this.

With one o'clock—the hour of luncheon—came Sniggs, and his report was such as to convince me that no hope remained of saving the boy; it then struck me that I would wait until the fatal event occurred, and immediately afterwards start for Bath to break the news to Cuthbert; then I resolved upon writing, anticipating in my letter the worst which might happen. Sniggs worried me with technicalities, and the smell of the camphor with which he was highly perfumed reminded me of the danger likely to be incurred by his visit; for although the whole establishment had been rendered proof against the infection, still the baby was yet unharmed, and when I saw him deliberately sit down to help himself to cold fowl and tongue, and ask the servant for some hot potato and cold butter, my patience was severely tested.

Yet why should I have been vexed and irritated? What

was poor Tom Falwasser to him? He was his patient, and promised to be a valuable one, supposing his recovery to excite his father-in-law's gratitude—but else Tom, uninteresting as it must be confessed he was while in health, interested not my worthy friend the apothecary more than any other lout who might be put under his care for cure. Sniggs evidently enjoyed his repast, and from him I learned that Daly had actually left Blissfold; the state of mind in which he found the rector and myself, and the unceremonious manner in which we felt absolutely compelled to turn him out, had determined him no doubt to quit a place, the hospitality of which could not have appeared to him in any very favourable light. It was, however, a seasonable relief to me to be assured of his absence. All that I had to reproach myself with was, the not having taken a favourable opportunity to inquire if any pecuniary aid would be essentially serviceable to him. I consoled myself, however, upon this point with the belief that if he felt himself at any time "hard run" he would make no scruple in applying to me for assistance.

"Indeed?" said Sniggs, "this is an awkward job—Master Tom's dying at my house—infectious disease—keep away patients—never had such a thing happen to me before—odd circumstance—deuced unlucky."

"It is, indeed," said I, thinking at the same time of the two bottles of cherry brandy.

"You know Dr. Fuz by sight," said Sniggs, still eating—"the old man at Bassford—retired from practice now; did live here five-and-twenty years ago—comes to church sometimes—sits in the chancel opposite the rector—he had a patient in *his* house—did I ever tell you that, sir?"

"I think not," said I, in a tone which ought to have induced a belief that I did not particularly wish to hear it then.

"Deuced odd," said my friend. "Fuz was riding home one night from visiting, and was stopped by a highwayman—things now getting out of fashion. 'Money or your life!' said the fellow. Fuz pulled up—a man who had saved so many other lives instinctively desired to preserve his own. 'Don't abuse me, sir—you shall have all I have got.' Dark as it was, the remotest recesses of the Doctor's pockets were hunted in order to satisfy the rapacity of the robber, and twenty guineas, a ten pound note, a few shillings, and a gold watch, were delivered to the marauder, who, making the Doctor a graceful bow, wished him a good evening and went his way. Fuz—fond of money as he was, and deeply re-

greeting his watch, the heir-loom of the Fuzzes—put spurs to his horse, which, as George Colman says,

‘—— was indeed a very sorry hack,  
But that’s of course,  
For what’s expected from a horse  
With an apothecary on his back!’

He! he! he! So away goes Fuz, as hard as he can with such cavalry—reaches home—rushes into the arms of Mrs. F., and bids her thank Providence that he is returned safe and sound, although deprived of his gold, silver, notes, watch, and ornamental appendages.

“‘What are ornaments, compared with your life?’ exclaimed the affectionate female Fuz. ‘I do thank Providence—think no more of the money, love—it is, as they say, only mousting twenty or thirty pair of stairs next week, and it will all return.’ And after this sweet parley, they sat themselves down to supper.

“Scarcely had they entered fully into the enjoyment of the social meal, before a loud ringing at their gate aroused them from their comforts.

“‘I know what it is,’ said Fuz; ‘Mrs. Rattletrap is——’

“‘What, I can’t say,’ said Sniggs, “for the rest of the doctor’s supposition was cut short by the entrance of one of the servants, who announced that a gentleman had been fired at by a highwayman, not a quarter of an hour before, and severely wounded. His horse, from which he had fallen, had escaped, and two labourers, who had found him lying on the ground, groaning heavily, had brought him direct to the doctor’s door.

“Up jumped the doctor, out he ran, and there, sure enough, found a gentleman bleeding, and looking excessively pale; he had him carried into one of the parlours, and laid upon a sofa—his coat was taken off, and, upon examination, it appeared that he had received a gun-shot wound in his left arm—the ball, however, had passed clean through, marvellously escaping the heart of the sufferer, who, it was evident to the learned Fuz, was rendered senseless by the fall from his horse, rather than the effects of the hit. The doctor, who was one of the most humane of men, first bled his patient, and then, when the gentleman was sufficiently recovered to comprehend the extent of his care and hospitality, told him that he could not think of letting him stir out that night, and had, accordingly, ordered a

bed to be got ready for him. The wounded stranger was quite overpowered by the courtesy of his doctor.

"'Sir,' said Fuz, 'it is not mere common-place civility that I offer. It is a duty I owe to Providence, sir;—the villain who wounded *you* robbed *me*, sir, not half an hour before, within twenty yards of the same place. If I had happened to deny him, or to have had nothing about me, sir, I might have been shot instead of you.'

"'Very probably, sir,' said the gentleman, 'I believe it is very bad policy to make any resistance—somebody is sure to suffer.'

"'Oh,' said Fuz, 'that's very true; but the highwayman sometimes gets the worst of it.'

"'Yes,' said the patient, 'but I shall never try my hand again that way; however, your kindness, sir, has been most seasonably bestowed, and I hope to be able to show you how very sensibly I feel it.'

"'Don't mention it, sir,' said Fuz; 'don't fatigue yourself with talking—lean on me—I will show you the way to your room;—you will find every thing comfortable, I hope. I shall bring you some gruel, with a leetle very old Lisbon in it—Mrs. Fuz's favourite tippie—and a leetle dry toast, and then you will get a comfortable night, as I hope, and in the morning I shall have the happiness of presenting you to Mrs. F., and, in two or three days, all will be well again.'

"It should be observed," continued Sniggs, "not that I mean to question my old predecessor's philanthropy, but it is possible such a thing might have had its effect—that, when he removed the stranger's coat and waistcoat, he—accidentally, of course—perceived a good store of sterling coin in one of the pockets of the latter garment, which gave the provident doctor a good, or rather a golden opinion of his chance customer, and seemed fully to justify the resistance which he had made to the highwayman's attack.

"'I can never thank you sufficiently,' said the patient, as he toiled his way to the room appropriated to his use. Arrived at the apartment, the doctor's own man was in attendance, to assist and undress the opulent stranger.

"'And now,' said Fuz, 'now, my dear sir, when you are comfortably in bed, and would like the gruel I spoke of, do as Lady Macbeth did—

"Strike upon the bell,"

and I will bring 'the drink' myself. There is something

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in your misfortune and my escape which specially binds me to you—so do as I prescribe.’

“‘Indeed, sir,’ said the gentleman, ‘your kindness is far beyond any thing I could have expected from a stranger.’

“‘Not a word about it, sir,’ said Fuz; ‘you see I act upon the best principle. You were a stranger, and I have taken you in.’

“‘Well,” said Sniggs, “the bell was struck—the gruel was taken—the patient shook the doctor’s hand, and they parted; the doctor entreating the patient, if he should feel the wound uneasy, or any feverish symptoms should annoy him during the night, to ring his bell, and summon him to his apartment.

“‘What Fuz said to Mrs. F., in that season of perfect ingenuousness which is comprised in the half-hour after retiring to rest, I know not,’ continued Sniggs, “but the chances are that he congratulated himself upon having what he called formed a connexion; he spoke with admiration of the manner of his guest, and certainly did not omit to substantiate all his favourable opinions by a reference to the contents of his sinister waistcoat-pocket—

‘Gold is the strength, the sinews of the world;  
The health, the soul, the beauty most divine;  
A mask of gold hides all deformities,—  
Gold is heaven’s physic, life’s restorative.’

So says Dekkar, and so thought Fuz.

“‘Well, sir,” said Sniggs, “the patient slept soundly—no bell rang. Fuz was equally at his ease, nor did he wake till nine. Up he gets—dresses with the nicest precision—and down to his patient in the best bed-room—taps at the door—no answer—taps again—still mute—‘Can he be dead?’ muttered Fuz: ‘tetanus, by Jove.’ In he bolts—rushes to the bed—there was the nest, but the bird was flown. What did it mean? what could it mean?—where was he? what was he? In the midst of his confusion, Fuz threw his eyes upon a neat small table, covered with a red cloth, whereon were deposited an inkstand, portefeuille, and all the other implements for writing, upon which lay a note, without a superscription, which, being directed to nobody, might be meant for any body. This Fuz opened, and thus he read:—



“‘DEAR SIR,’

“‘I shall never forget your kindness. I felt it necessary to relieve you of my presence as soon as possible. You are much too good a fellow to suffer. Under the pillow of my bed you will find twenty guineas and a ten pound note; accept them without scruple, for they are your own: and in order farther to show my sense of gratitude, I beg to add, that if you will take the trouble to walk to the second field on the right hand beyond the turnpike, you will find your watch, chain, and seals stuck into a haystack which stands in the corner of it. I have to apologize for not having wound it up. I do not regret my wound, for if the two worthies who shot me last night had been as good-natured as you, I should never have had the pleasure of your acquaintance, and you would never have got your own property back as a fee.

“‘Yours.’

“‘How so!’ cried the doctor, ‘this is strange!’ The doctor, however, did not lose much time before he lifted the pillow and found his money, and the first thing he did after he had breakfasted was to walk to the hay-stack and recover his watch. Wasn’t that a good joke?”

“Yes,” said I, having mechanically listened to the narrative.

“But,” continued he, having completely anatomized the chicken, “I must be off again, you shall hear in an hour—and another bulletin before post-time.”

“If it ends fatally,” said I, “I shall go to my brother—that I am resolved upon.”

In this determination Sniggs strengthened me; and as soon as he had left the house, I went to Harriet, in order to prepare her for my departure. Mrs. Wells had, for the first day since my wife’s confinement, left her and gone to the rectory accompanied by Fanny, so that I had an opportunity of talking over our family matters without interruption; and since Harriet had now recovered sufficient strength to discuss the several points which appeared to press, it was a great comfort to me to find her views of the future characterized by the same sweet, mild, and generous spirit which she had uniformly displayed in what I now began to fear might have been our brightest days. My anticipations with regard to my brother’s conduct after the death of Tom seemed perfectly to agree with those of my wife; we felt that he was estranged from us, and that no

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thing was wanting but such an event as this to sever entirely the bonds between us.

"What does it signify, Gilbert?" said Harriet: "we have a larger house than we want: a cottage will answer our purpose, and a plain, nice little garden will do just as well, without all these grounds, and these hot-houses, and pine-ries, and luxuries. Oh no, dear; so long as we have health we shall have happiness: and, after all, Gilbert, we shall be more independent."

"Come," said I, "we will not make up our minds yet to the reality of our reverses: it is quite right, when one does depend upon the will of others, to be prepared for the worst; and you delight me by the way in which you bend to the coming wave. Still, I will not suffer myself to think so ill either of Cuthbert's head or heart as even yet entirely to believe that we shall need to practise our philosophy."

Thus I said; but did not *feel* as secure as I wished my poor love to imagine I did.

While these things were passing at Ashmead, other affairs were in progress at the rectory. Merman, whose anxiety and rapidity of movement induced me to think that he was sincerely attached to Fanny, had followed his letter, and was actually ensconced in his old lodgings in Blissfold within a few hours after Wells received it. Of this fact he apprized the worthy rector, and it was in consequence of these prompt measures that Mrs. Wells and her daughter had gone home to deliberate and decide.

It is impossible for me to say what were the arguments adduced pro and con, or who chiefly advocated the cause of the lieutenant; but, as I have already stated, the moment I heard that offended pride and a lady's love were to be put in opposite scales, and that Miss Fanny was to hold the beam, I entertained very little doubt which would preponderate.

I ought, perhaps, to mention that Miss Millicent Maloney had not been heard of by Mrs. Pennefather at the time of the lieutenant's departure—a circumstance which induced her affectionate friend to believe that the companion of her flight was not altogether so unexceptionable as she had hoped. It turned out, moreover, that the young lady's maid, Gibson, did not accompany her; but, on the contrary, was perfectly ignorant of her flight. Miss Maloney having sent her on an errand to the neighbouring town, desiring her to wait there for her, she did wait until so long after the usual dinner hour at home, that she fancied she must have made some mistake, and then returned; and, as she said

herself, "the very first syllable as ever she heard of Miss Milly's going was from Susan when she came into the house."

Nobody in the neighbourhood had seen Miss Maloney out in the afternoon, either alone or with any body else; no horses had been ordered from, nor come to, any of the inns in the town, nor to the ale-house in the village, nor had any carriage passed through since the morning. Where, how, when, and with whom the young lady had migrated still therefore remained a mystery.

Not so the termination of the proceedings at the rectory; for, hearing the approach of visitors across the lawn somewhere about four o'clock, I looked out and beheld four familiar faces, "wreathed in smiles," looking up at the windows of Harriet's room. They belonged to the rector and his lady, who walked first, and to Fanny Wells and Lieutenant Merman, who followed arm-in-arm, just as sociable as if nothing had ever happened to ripple the course of their true love.

I welcomed the young couple—for now they were avowedly a pair—and shook my brother-in-law by the hand, with a determination to make the best of it, still however silently wishing that the service of his country might require his presence in some field of glory far from the quiet plains of Ashmead.

It was now drawing near post-time, and I was waiting impatiently for Sniggs, or a despatch from him, in order to regulate my proceedings. It was just five, and I grew dreadfully uneasy, and began to pace up and down my library, when the door opened and the servant gave me a note from Sniggs, sealed with black wax. My fingers trembled as I opened it. Opened, however, it was, and I read: "DEAR SIR,

"The boy is less feverish, and I think things look better. You shall see me this evening.

"Yours,

"S. SNIGGS."

This unexpected report, of course, decided my stay; and, accordingly, I wrote to Cuthbert a detailed account of Tom's progress, and would have enclosed Sniggs' last hope-giving note, but I was sure that the word "boy" would have excited all my brother's ire, and given an idea of neglect and carelessness in our proceedings, so I copied it, leaving the fact, and substituting the word patient for the less respectful monosyllable which I found in the original.

I confess I was quite delighted with the bulletin, worded

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as it might have been; for, when the crisis seemed to be so evidently at hand, every cross word I had uttered with regard to young Falwasser seemed to rise up in judgment against me, although when he was well I scarcely ever saw a human being I hated so much.

We are strange creatures, and I, perhaps, one of the oddest; however, I ate my dinner with a better appetite than I expected; and after it was over, drank, conjointly, the healths of Fanny Wells and Lieutenant Philip Merman. This seemed strangest of all.

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## CHAPTER XI.

I confess that I went to bed, after having received Sniggs' account of Tom, and after having transmitted it in my own language to Cuthbert, with an infinitely stronger hope of getting some tolerable rest than I had entertained for many previous nights. I had done what I felt to be my duty to a brother, who, eccentric as he might be, had always shown me the greatest kindness, and of whose mutability of disposition towards me I might, even now, have formed the most groundless and unjustifiable anticipations; and, in so doing, had conquered a pride and prejudice which I ought probably never to have entertained in such a case.

The moment my mind was a little relieved under these circumstances, my thoughts naturally directed themselves to an object which most especially claimed an undivided interest, but which the agitating events of the last few days had separated—I mean, the state, condition and prospects of my son and heir. What his inheritance might be it seemed somewhat difficult to calculate; but I thought, young as he was, that it was time to consult with Harriet as to the steps to be taken with regard to his baptism, and whether, if Tom should happily recover, I might venture to remind Cuthbert of his promise of standing godfather.

Nothing in the world, I am convinced, is more seriously or more constantly worrying than the possession of a very near relative with a very whimsical disposition. The moment I made my suggestion to Harriet, which I did dandling the dear little baby in my arms—only think—she instantly started the difficulty which existed in taking the first step: if we did not remind Cuthbert of the promise he had made, he might take the trouble to be offended with us; and if we *did* jog his memory, the chances were a hundred to one that he would be in as great a passion as he could muster because we bored him on the subject. Then there was to be another godfather and a godmother; now we thought over one or two eligible men for Cuthbert's brother-sponsor, in case *he* stood; but then we dare not whisper our wishes to any one of them until we had taken counsel from the nabob: and, as for a godmother, we did not know where to turn for one. The Nubleys were away, and had let their house to a sporting gentleman, with three or four questionable nieces, or cousins, or sisters, or something of that sort; so that neither Mr. Nubley on the one hand, nor Mrs. Nubley on the other, were available. Mrs. Wells might perhaps officiate; but then—in short, all seemed to depend upon Cuthbert's fiat, and Cuthbert and his fiat depended on Tom's recovery.

As far as this very important event went, it was my good fortune to receive a favourable account soon after ten o'clock: things looked better, and Sniggs had hopes, which, however, were tempered conditionally, "if" so and so happened in the course of the day, and "if" so and so did not happen in the night, "we might anticipate a favourable result;" which, if I had not felt sanguinely, and had been by any means jocosely inclined, I should have construed into a sort of sage declaration on the part of Sniggs, that, under all circumstances, it was his opinion that if poor Tom did not die he would recover.

Nevertheless there was hope—and a brighter hope than had beamed a day before; and, as Sniggs was good enough to inform me in a postscript, that he would be at Ashmead as usual at one—an hour at which he was as certain to appear as Monk Lewis's popular ghost was to exhibit itself in its immediate opposite in the twenty-four hours, I felt convinced that he was in his own mind satisfied of the chances, at least, in the young uncouth patient's favour.

Having talked placidly with Harriet, played my child into a squalling fit, and received a sort of reproachful look from the nurse for having jumped it about at much too violent a

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rate for its age and size—for I had not at that period any just notion of the relative strength of materials, I proceeded to strengthen my outward man with breakfast; at which time the post arrives, and which, by an admirable contrivance of the General Post Office, under the actual, though not nominal guidance of one of the worthiest of men and most efficient public officers that ever lived, does me the favour to bring to my hand my London and my cross-country letters all at once, “simultaneously,” as poor Nubley would have muttered while picking his dear old chin, so that my news flowed in from all quarters, if I had any to receive from more than one.

My bag arrived—was deposited, unlocked—one letter from London about furniture—one from Winchester about books—one from Bath, about what, I wonder?—a strange hand, evidently a woman’s, a long, delicate, nearly unintelligible scrawl—a seal I know not—who can this be?—Bath—not Cuthbert? Yes, thought I, it is from my dear indolent Indian, who, in the plenitude of his laziness, has got some one of his fair friends at Montpelier to scrawl it for him; and then I thought I recognised the extremely pretty unintelligibility of Kate’s calligraphy—that, of course, I opened first, for furniture and books, although on their road, could not very rapidly follow their *avant couriers*:—crack went the seal—flap went the paper, and I saw—

“*Montplier, Bath.*”

“DEAR MR. GURNEY,

“Your good, kind, but terribly lazy brother has begged me to be his amanuensis; and when a request, even were its fulfilment troublesome in any eminent degree, is made by so amiable and so universally beloved a person as he is, it is wholly beyond the power of ordinary humanity to resist or refuse—in order to make some particular inquiries concerning the state of health of the dear, interesting Thomas, to whom we are all devotedly attached:—nothing, indeed, my dear Mr. Gurney, contributes more essentially to the maintenance of the sentiments of high regard and fervent esteem which my bosom cherishes for your amiable brother, than the generous and paternal anxiety with which he regards the every thought and action of the dear children, who are rendered invaluable to him by the memory of their departed mother, than whom—from all I hear, not only from him, but from other individuals, who had the honour and happiness of being favoured, not only with her mere ordinary acquaintance, but with friendship

which may be considered really intimate and confidential—was, if ever there was what is colloquially called an angel upon earth, one of them in every acceptation of that very comprehensive phraseology.

“His anxiety—dear, kind-hearted man—is naturally increased in a ten-fold degree by the knowledge that circumstances render it impossible for you or your dear Harriet to afford poor Thomas any personal attention, and that he is consigned to the care of the professional gentleman who attends you: he is, however, confident that every care and attention will be used with respect to his comforts, and his diet, and the gratification of all his little wishes, as far as may be consistent with the cooling regimen so essentially necessary in a case like his; and he desires me to say that you may, at any seasonable opportunity, insinuate in the manner you may consider most effective, without violating any of the delicacies and decorums of society, to which professional gentlemen are so sensitively alive, that the recovery of Master Falwasser will be an event likely to prove, in every way, advantageous to Mr. Sniggs.”

Here I laid down the letter for one minute or so, in order to think of what had passed during the last few weeks. Here was Mrs. Brandyball writing to me—the amanuensis of my brother—a stranger—an alien—dictating, in his name, to me, what to do and how to act—anticipating a carefulness and watchfulness on the part of Sniggs, which unfortunately had not existed, and promising him a reward for services which reminded me of the last line of a newspaper advertisement from a man who proposed to doctor smoky chimneys, which ran thus—“No cure, no pay.” I paused—thought—put some sugar in my cup—ate a bit of toast—sipped my tea—and having indulged myself in an audible “Well!” proceeded to read on.

“Of one thing I am quite sure—at least so far as it is permitted to human fallibility to be certain of any thing—that if dear Thomas were to fall a sacrifice to the dreadful disorder of which he has been visited, it would be productive of the most serious consequences to his sensitively excellent and never-to-be-sufficiently-understood or appreciated father-in-law. As for my own personal feelings upon the subject, assure yourself, my dear Mr. Gurney, they are deeply interested in the result, independently of every other consideration, upon your account and that of your dear Harriet.”

“Deuce take the woman!” said I, throwing down the letter; “what in the name of impudence and ignorance

does she mean by calling *my* wife Harriet!—who wants her solicitude?—who cares for her being interested? Well!” And up I took the scrawl again.

“Poor dear Kate, whose intuitive perception of things in general is so remarkable, has satisfied his mind that the infection was derived from the maid-servant in your establishment, who was generally supposed to have been infected by dear Thomas; and dear Jane, who although not so highly gifted by nature as her elder sister, possesses an extraordinary share of observation and discrimination, considering her apparent diffidence and her actual juvenility, corroborates the opinion of her elder sister, by stating in the most unequivocal manner that Evans—I think the domestic’s patronymic is Evans—told her that she felt seriously indisposed at least three days before dear Thomas experienced any inconvenience.”

“The deuce take the woman!” again said I, adding a brief prayer for forgiveness; “dear Kate says this—and dear Jane says that—and dear Thomas—dear — I will *not* swear, but this is really too much—to be lectured by this Gorgon—to have an elder brother’s authority delegated to a Catamaran like this! Well!—let us see—by and by I suppose I shall be charged with a design upon dear Thomas’s life, and Daly’s joke played off in earnest.”

“All these contending circumstances prey upon your dear brother exceedingly, and I must candidly admit that I am confident I run no risk of hazarding your displeasure by a candid expression of my genuine sentiments, that his feelings have been a little exacerbated by the omission on your part to make him acquainted with the progress of the interesting invalid.”

“Why, how could I?” exclaimed I to myself. “Where the deuce was I to write to? By — but no, I won’t—I’ll keep my temper—that is, if I can. I’ll read the infernal thing through. Oh, my poor, poor brother! To think—to fancy—to believe. Well!—let’s see.”

“I merely venture to insinuate what I think, and to impress upon you the necessity of communicating with him, lest at any future period I might be supposed not to have apprized you of the real state of his feelings.”

“This is too plain,” said I, again throwing down the epistle, and again sipping my tea, which I could however hardly swallow for agitation—“‘a future period!’ Oh, she looks forward—some ulterior object—to some time when she may be reproached with hypocrisy and manœuvring.



If Harriet were but well—but then she is not—if she were, we would go to Bath.—But why?—then Tom—Well!”

“And especially as I repeat that a fatal termination to the dear boy’s illness would produce the most serious effects upon his mind and constitution.”

“Considerate creature!” said I.

“Your brother desires me to tell you that he forgot to say, till Hutton reminded him, that he has paid Binfield, the wine-merchant, up to the first of January, and that he thinks his Madeira dear and not good, and wishes you not to order any more wine of any sort of him.”

This paragraph completed, as I then thought, my misery. Here was a person—a few weeks since an utter stranger to any of us—not only acting secretary between one brother and another, but entering into our domestic discussions as if she were one of the family; besides, what a topic to touch upon, to inform Mrs. Brandyball that the wine she admired and patronised so liberally at Ashmead was not mine, but Cuthbert’s; and at the same time, and through the same medium, to convey a prohibitory command as to my ordering any more! But even this was not the climax, which, in fact, I was very near not reaching, so utterly upset and beaten was I by what I had already read. However, the bitter draught was destined to be drained to the dregs, and every body knows they generally prove the bitterest portion of the whole. I therefore continued—

“Aware as you are of your excellent brother’s constitutional inactivity, and the listlessness of his mind, you will scarcely give credence, even with your natural tendency to admit their influence over all his mundane transactions, to the fact—that it was not until not only dear Kate and dear Jane, and dear Kate and dear Jane’s maid, Hutton, his own man, and myself, had also agreed upon the point, that he could satisfy himself whether your dear Harriet’s baby was a boy or a girl. He had somehow confused in his mind the fact and the details; and I do assure you—probably his thoughts were pre-occupied by his solicitude concerning poor Thomas—it was not until he found us unanimous that we induced him to fatigue his memory so far as to recall a conversation which he had with you, and which he repeated afterwards to me, when we were alone, upon the subject. What a remarkable instance of evaporative intellectuality!”

This crowned all: “evaporative Tom-foolery!” said I. The idea that the main and leading incident of my life—

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the birth of my son and heir, of his nephew and intended godson, should have been totally forgotten, or, if not forgotten, so thoroughly jumbled up in his brain during an absence of a few days, as to leave him in a sort of waking dream, from which it required the united efforts of the family to awaken him.

The conclusion of the odious letter was made up of some fulsome compliments in the same high-flown language as characterized the rest of it; and having finished it, I threw it from me with a sort of shuddering disgust, which would have chilled me if the heat of anger had not counteracted its effects.

"So then," said I, aloud, "I verily believe, my poor brother is really caught; dragged from me, and manacled in a distant part of the country: his fetters, to be sure, are covered with roses—full-blown damask roses, it must be admitted. But there he is, as undeniably lost to me, as if he had never existed. Had Gulliver been constituted as Cuthbert was, when he was hampered by the pegs and pack-thread of the Lilliputians, there he would have lain until they had demolished him at their leisure; the effort to raise himself upon one hand or make one half turn of his body, by which he could have extricated himself in a moment, would have been an effort too mighty for indolence so overpowering as his, and thus he would have perished."

I saw no chance of extrication. Mrs. Brantwell, spider-like, had gotten him into her web, and was ~~sliding~~ sliming him every moment with compliments and attentions which would be sure to make him her own, and, Arachne like, when she had rendered him totally helpless she would put him by in store to marry, in all probability, when the before-spoken-of Easter holidays arrived. Well, and what then? Was it by any fault of mine that this had occurred? Had I any thing to reproach myself with? What sin of omission or commission had I been guilty of which ought, in any reasonable case, to have produced such results? I asked myself the question over and over again, and received from myself the same answers every time. I searched every corner of my mind in vain for one little morsel of just self-condemnation, but none could I find, and at last I worked myself up into a feeling not altogether fraternal, and wound up my soliloquy with—"Why, then, let him go to the — I won't write what I said—let him go his own way."

This came out impromptu, and I declare free from all selfishness of feeling; but a moment's reflection brought to

my view the startling fact that if Cuthbert went to the place I thought of, wherever it might be, in one direction, I must infallibly go thither in another. He was, as I have often recorded, and oftener felt, the "prop that did sustain my house," and what was to happen if I treated this letter and its writer with the scorn they seemed to me so richly to merit? I should only seal my destiny, and inflict a wound which I was well assured no time or circumstance could heal.

Speaking of a choice of difficulties, Swift asks, "Supposing the body of the earth were a great ball of the finest sand, and that a single grain or particle of this sand should be annihilated every thousand years. Supposing that you had it in your choice to be happy all the while this prodigious mass of sand was consuming by this slow method until there was not a grain of it left, on condition that you were to be miserable ever after; or supposing that you might be happy ever after, on condition you would be miserable until the whole mass of sand were thus annihilated at the rate of one sand in a thousand years; which of these two cases would you make your choice?"

This question seemed particularly apposite and applicable to my case—should I pocket all the affronts I had received, and continue dreaming on during poor Cuthbert's life, in a sort of negative hope of his ultimate return to a just, fraternal, and equitable feeling towards me, and his consequent fulfilment of all the promises he had made, and the realization of all the expectations he had raised, or at once exhibit what nobody could deny would be a just resentment at his abandonment of me in favour of aliens to our blood in the first instance, and in the last of a perfect stranger, and, by thus giving way to my natural feelings, now decide my fate as related to the future expression of his sentiments and the consequent disposition of his property?

If I had been alone—single in the world as Cuthbert found me when we so strangely met at Gosport—I know how I should have settled the affair. I should have got rid of the difficulty much after the Hibernian manner in which Alexander *untied* the Gordian knot by cutting it; but the case was now different; I was a husband and a father, and should not have ventured to marry, as ~~he~~ knew, had he not placed me in a position which entitled me to ask and receive such a blessing as a wife like Harriet.

Yet Harriet would have married me for myself alone,—nay, she had proved her sincerity upon that point by subjecting herself to trials and difficulties with a devotion, and

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even heroism, not to be expected from one so young and so little knowing in the wide world's ways. What had been the expression of her sentiments upon this very subject a day or two before? I had anticipated what would happen, had touched upon it—exactly what might have been calculated, upon—and then, after all, as she said, we could be happy in a smaller house, with a smaller establishment, to be supported on a smaller income. Well, then, why not at once fire the train, return no answer to Mrs. Brandyball's fine, figurative, free-and-easy rigmarole, but write direct to my brother a letter of remonstrance, of reproach even, and endeavour, if possible, to rouse him to a sense of his own situation and of mine.

Of course I did not hastily put any scheme of this sort into execution, for—which, indeed, was one of the most painful parts of the business—I felt it absolutely necessary to consult Harriet, although confident of her acquiescence. Fuller says, "A good wife sets up a sail according to the keel of her husband's estate;" and I was certain that in all she had said upon the last occasion I took of mentioning my suspicions of Cuthbert's defection, she was as sincere and true as I had ever found her in all other matters; but it grieved me to be obliged to trouble her so far as even to grant her acquiescence. Nevertheless, *that* was my course, and I resolved to hold a council with her so soon as any intelligence arrived from Sniggs with regard to the boy, the nature of which might greatly influence our decision, inasmuch as if the result were fatal, I still adhered to my determination of going to Bath.

It turned out, however, that for the present that resolution was not to be put in practice, for my bulletin announced that Tom, although not better than he was last night, was not worse, the fever had not more abated, and that in fact he was much the same. As this information portended no sudden catastrophe, it became the more necessary that I should decide upon the line I meant to adopt with regard to Mrs. Brandyball's despatch, which must be either answered somehow, or not answered at all, by return of post. I therefore rang for Foxcroft, in order to ascertain when I might present myself up-stairs to communicate with my better half upon the subject now nearest my heart.

The faithful handmaid, who seemed, from a sort of feminine regard for my gander-like condition, and a respect, as I thought, for my parental character, most amiably attentive to all my little wants and wishes during Harriet's temporary absence from our domestic circle, informed me that

I might be received forthwith, for that her mistress was sitting up, and expecting me. This sounded like music in my ears; this first marked step in the progress towards her restoration to society, to her return to those familiar scenes which her presence cheered and enlightened, was a set-off to all the mortifications I had just experienced, and I bounded up stairs as if I had gained some new and important object, and beheld with a pleasure I cannot attempt to describe, the beloved of my heart ensconced in a huge armed chair, looking as calm, as pale, and as placid as "Patience on a monument." That she did smile at grief, personified by her much-disturbed husband, was no small addition to my gratification; and the gentle kiss she bestowed upon me was of more value to me at the moment than the *accolade* of a sovereign to an expectant courtier.

The slight flush which coloured her fair cheek after this "chaste salute" gave new beauties to her countenance, and brought her back to my view, just as she looked in other days, and when I little thought she ever would be mine, as we strolled in the rectorial shrubberies. A thousand recollections filled my mind, and I felt so happy that I dreaded to dissipate the bright vision by referring to the "order of the day," and beginning to discuss the business for her opinion upon which I had sought her.

It was absolutely necessary that something should be decided upon; and I wished to obtain her judgment upon Mrs. Brandyball's letter and its contents, free and unbiassed by any thing I might say or suggest; and therefore having prepared her for "bad news," in order that she might be rather agreeably surprised than not when she had perused it, I placed the epistle before her, and begged her calmly and quietly to read it through, while I proceeded to gaze upon my yet unchristianized boy, who lay sleeping in a swinging cot by the side of the maternal bed—and I had just fallen into a kind of reverie, in which my mind was filled by a thousand conflicting thoughts and anticipations as to the destiny of the unconscious innocent before me, when the gentle tap of Foxcroft at the door produced the gentle "Come in" of her dear mistress.

"If you please, sir," said the damsel, "Mr. Kittington is in the breakfast-room, and wishes to speak to you."

"Who?" said I.

"The dancing-master, sir," said Foxcroft.

"I dare say," said Harriet, "Cuthbert never recollected to have him paid."

"Most likely," said I. "Say I will be down directly."

Foxcroft retired, smilingly, as was her wont.

"Well," said Harriet, "I never read such a letter as this."

"How far have you read?" said I.

"To where she attributes Tom's disorder to our servants," said Harriet, "and blames you for not writing to Cuthbert, when you did not know how to direct a letter to him."

"Ah," said I, "that's nothing to what you will come to presently. All I beg of you is, to keep your temper, Harriet—don't be in a passion—treat it as I do, and all will be well. I don't wish to influence your judgment, dear, but I have made up *my* mind. I suppose my Terpsichorean visitor will not keep me long. I shall be back directly—then give me your opinion;" saying which, I repeated the gentle kiss with which the council had opened, and proceeded to the breakfast-room, where I found Foxcroft kindly explaining to Mr. Kittington the peculiar beauty of what she called a "lovely gereenum," which stood just inside the conservatory, which opened into the apartment.

Mr. Kittington appeared a little embarrassed at my appearance, as did Miss Foxcroft; but ladies or ladies' maids have always a command over themselves, and an aptitude for getting out of scrapes with a presence of mind most wonderful. The pump-shod professor coloured up "ruddier than the cherry," and looked more embarrassed than usual; but Foxcroft, without moving a muscle of her countenance, no sooner saw me approach, than she let go the flower, upon which she was apparently lecturing, and said, as if she had been told to wait till I arrived, "Here is my master, sir."

They say that "they who live in glass houses should not throw stones." There are two or three other things which people so circumstanced should not do; not that I mean to infer that lecturing upon "gereenums" is one of them. Foxcroft, however, wagged her pretty little fantailed figure out of the room, and left Mr. Kittington and myself *tête-à-tête*.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Kittington; "but I really am ashamed to trouble you—I—" Here he faltered, and looked silly again; "but I—"

"Pray don't mention it," said I: "I think I can almost guess—"

"Indeed, sir," said the dancing-master, "I assure you I would not have intruded upon you, but—"

I heard by anticipation the well-known sequel—"I have a very large amount to make up next week."

"But the circumstances are very peculiar."

Here he paused again.

"Pray don't apologize," said I, encouragingly; "my brother, Mr. Cuthbert Gurney, is so thoughtless and indolent, that these things are frequently occurring."

"Are you aware, sir," said Kittington, "of the——"

"Oh, I know, of course," replied I; "there is no necessity for any delicacy between us, Mr. Kittington; my brother naturally expected to hear from you after your great attention to Kate and the others; but have you got it about you?"

"Yes, sir," said Kittington, "I have brought it with me. Indeed, I had no other object in calling here; but I could not have imagined that you were aware of the existence of any thing of the kind."

"Why, I guessed as much," said I; "but it is of no sort of consequence."

"Indeed! sir," said Kittington.

"There can be no objection, I am sure," said I. "I will undertake to settle it without any reference to my brother, who, as I have already said, is too indolent to take much trouble about any thing."

"That is very surprising, sir!" said Kittington; "I think you must be mistaken."

"No, no," said I, smiling, "the same thing has happened often before."

Kittington here appeared somewhat astounded, and wishing to relieve him from an embarrassment which seemed to me to be more particular than the occasion required, I begged him to hand me the "document," as I facetiously called his "bill," not liking the word, either as applied to myself or to any body in the shape of a gentleman to whom I had to pay money.

"How far I should be justified in doing so, sir," said Kittington, "I really do not know—my position is a very delicate one—and—really I am so overcome by the difficulty in which I am placed, or rather, in which I have placed myself, that I am scarcely able to proceed."

"I never saw," said I, "so much delicacy on such a point. What scruples can you have in accepting what you must feel yourself justly to have acquired, and most richly to deserve? I am sure the way my niece Kitty has spoken to us of your attention and kindness fully justifies you in preferring your claims; so let us to business."

"My dear sir," said Kittington, "the manner in which you meet this subject is to me most surprising, and confounds me more than all the rest. I merely attended Miss

Falwasser and her sister, professionally—and—I—had no conception—she so extremely young—and—the fact is—I—really—I thought I was doing my duty in mentioning the fact—because I had no idea that you were aware—in truth I—difference of rank and position—and—besides, sir, putting aside any thing else, I—it is imperative I should mention that I am actually engaged to be married.”

“Well, my dear sir,” said I, “I am very glad to hear it, and sincerely wish you joy; but I tell you again, there needs no such explanation. What your marrying has to do with a trifle like this, a matter, no doubt, of every day occurrence with gentlemen of your profession——”

“My dear sir,” said Kittington, turning alternately pale and red, “indeed, indeed, it is no such thing: such matters do now and then happen; and waltzing, I confess between ourselves, is rather—a little conducive—but I assure you, I do not consider this by any means a trifling affair.”

“Why,” said I, getting rather out of patience with the mock-modesty of my companion, “what does it amount to, after all?”

“Why, sir,” said Kittington, “although when I took the liberty of sending in my name, my intention was, as in duty bound, that is, according to my own feelings, to have shown you the note; but as it is, it involves a compromise—and——”

“Oh,” said I, “I want no compromise.”

“No, sir,” said Kittington; “but I mean Miss Katharine Falwasser may——”

“She!” exclaimed I; “no, no, she wants no compromise, you may rely upon it; you have only to ask and have; there isn’t a more liberal-hearted child in the world, whatever other faults she may possess.”

“Child!” said Kittington; “there you have used the very word—I said the difference of age between her, and——”

“And Jane,” interrupted I; “ah, there’s a difference of age, but of course Jane would not interfere in such a matter as this.”

“Oh, no,” said Kittington, “I must do Miss Falwasser the justice to say, that she distinctly asserts that Miss Jane is totally ignorant of her sister’s steps.”

“Ah,” said I, “that’s a pity, as they learned together; but Jane is not nearly so forward in any thing as Kate.”

“No, no,” said Kittington, “very different characters; but I really could not have imagined that you could have been aware of the circumstances, else, as I have just said, I should not have felt it necessary to call here, but have sent direct to Miss Falwasser herself.”



"That's perfectly useless," said I; "don't worry yourself for a moment; I appreciate your delicacy, and if you will let me see the document as I call it, I think the settlement will be the affair of a few minutes."

"Well, sir," said Kittington, "I have taken my line; I have been very much surprised at what has passed between us; I may be censured and laughed at by Miss Falwasser: it struck me I had only one course to pursue, and, having adopted that course, can have no hesitation in fulfilling my original intentions with a positive assurance that no human being, except ourselves, shall ever hear one syllable of the affair."

This speech, delivered with a degree of seriousness and earnestness for which I certainly was not prepared, and which the delivery of a dancing-master's bill for teaching, did not appear to me to require, was terminated by his handing me a glossy, musk-smelling note, of delicate dimensions, which he drew from an envelope that he held in his hand.

I thought him somewhat of a dandy before, but when I saw this odoriferous morsel make its way to the light, I set him down as the most consummate blockhead I ever saw. Having handed me the "document," he threw himself into an armed chair with a "flump" very inconsistent with his usual manner of proceeding at Ashmead, and fixed his eyes upon me with an expression of interest and curiosity, which struck me as very remarkable. I opened the "bill" and read:—

"I have struggled with my feelings ever since we parted; but I cannot conquer them. You must have seen how interesting I have thought you for some time past. I never was happy but the days you were combing, and even Jane said I was in love with you—you must know the same. I am very young, but older than I look for—I am, I know, more than sixteen; for I heard my governess say that my mamma made us out all two years younger than we really are, in order, poor dear thing, to seem younger herself. Jane does not know of this letter; but I have persuaded pappy that nobody can teach us to dance like you, and he is quite ready you should. If you would make believe you were coming to settle at Bath, you might come and call, and I know dear Mrs. Brandyball would have you here, and then, dear Henry—you see I know your dear name—I am sure pappy would not mind our being married, or if he did, we might helope, and when we came back after it was over he would forgive us in a minute.

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"Do, do come, dear Henry, and then we can walk out while pappy is playing chess; and I can make Jane stay with him—do not be cross with me for this; and if you answer me, direct to me under cover to Mrs. Brandyball, and then I shall get it safe—and do send me a lock of your hair—I do love red hair so—and say you will come. I do nothing but play 'The Opéra Hat' and 'Molly put the Kettle on,' the last two tunes we danced to. They have a stupid dancing-mistress at Montpelier. I never dance now—and never shall—never will—no, nor sleep either till you come. Do come, do dear Henry,

"Yours affectionately,

"You can guess who.

"P. S. I shall have a hundred thousand pounds when pappy dies."

"Mr. Kittington," said I, throwing down this precious epistle, "I have a thousand apologies to make to you. I had, of course, no conception of an event like this, and, of course, could not appreciate either the honourable course you have adopted, or the agitation under which, as it appeared to me, you were unnecessarily labouring; it is needless for me to say that I am totally unacquainted with any thing concerning the proceedings of this extraordinary girl, and confined my speculations to some habitual neglect of my brother in not settling your account for tuition; but this is a blow which I was not prepared for, and yet——"

"The blow, sir," said Kittington, modestly, but firmly, as if conscious of the rectitude of his conduct at the sacrifice of some *éclat*, "is, I trust, avoided. Of course I shall return no answer to the young lady's letter, however flattering her youthful admiration may be; I resign it to you, and with it, all pretensions to any further consideration from her. I will now admit to you that I am under no matrimonial engagement; but that when I found you, as I imagined, lending yourself to an arrangement so entirely unsuitable in all its points and bearings, I ventured to put a conclusive negative upon it by what perhaps you will admit to have been a justifiable exaggeration. I am aware that there is something ludicrous associated in society with the exercise of my profession; but I trust that the adoption of that profession from necessity rather than choice, for the support of an aged mother and unmarried sister, the widow and daughter of a gentleman, whose indulgence to his spoiled and helpless son left him no means of a livelihood but by the exercise of the only calling for which he was qualified, has not

stifled the feelings of honour which that indulgent father did not fail to implant in his heart. Sir, I am deeply affected by what has occurred. I need not say that no syllable of this will be breathed by me; exonerate me only from having in any way induced this unfortunate sentiment on the part of the young lady, which, in the course of six months, will fade away and take some brighter hue. If you think I have acted justly, I am satisfied."

"Sir," said I, much moved by his manner and evident sincerity, "you have acted up to the character which you have inherited. Permit me to offer you my hand, and to assure you how sincerely I am—as we all must be—indebted to you for what you have done."

"Aware," said Kittington, "of the feelings which this disclosure must have naturally excited in your breast, I will no longer intrude—I leave the letter with you, and——"

"Nay," said I, "stay; take some luncheon—let me beg of you to stay."

"No," said Kittington, "I must not stay—I have pupils to attend to at one; and you may judge, Mr. Gurney, what the trials of a man, professing any of the lighter arts, must be, when you know that I have to devote the next two hours to teaching children to dance, while the mother, of whom I have just spoken to you, is lying on a bed of sickness, and, I fear, of death. My heart, however, will be easier for what I have done this day; and, although the thoughtless Miss Falwasser may laugh at or despise me, I never shall regret the just course I have adopted."

I could make no reply. I again shook hands with him cordially, and resolved—no matter what.—I rang the bell, and he left me—and left me with a new difficulty upon my hands, and one which appeared to me to be insurmountable. It was a web so complex, so intertwined, and interlaced, that I could not imagine what was to be done. It was clear that Mrs. Brandyball had lent herself to a scheme which she hoped would detach Cuthbert's greatest favourite from him eternally. The letter was to be directed under cover to her. If, therefore, I made a confidence with that hateful woman, she would instantly betray me to Kate. If I condescended to enter upon the subject with Kate herself, which really, considering her age, either computed or ascertained, I could not bring myself to do, she would at once fall into a fit of rage against the dastardly dancing-master, who in so base and cowardly a manner had boasted of her affections at the moment of rejecting them; and if I approached Cuthbert himself, the very idea of charging his beloved daughter,

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as he called her, poor fellow! with such an attack, would have toppled me down instantaneously from the slippery ledge of his favour on which I so equivocally stood at present.

I half wished that Kittington had not been so honourable, and that he had run away with the girl: that would have opened Cuthbert's eyes, and then, perhaps, we could have fixed the confederacy upon Mrs. Brandyball, and so have blown up (as poor Tom would like to have done) the whole faction. But this was selfish. Kittington had behaved admirably: no fault could be found with him: but only conceive what an addition to all the difficulties with which the answer to the letter left for Harriet's perusal this incident was! It must be noticed. It could not die away. Kate would not rest content without some sort of acknowledgment of her address to her "golden-haired preceptor."

There was one striking characteristic in her *billet-doux* which rendered the girl less amiable than any thing else; the love part of the affair was not in my mind the worst; the feeling which I hated throughout the whole appeal was the total carelessness and callousness with regard to every thing but self, which pervaded every line. As for her affectionate pappy, he was only spoken of as being easily deceived, easily imposed upon, and to leave her a fortune at his death. Her sister Jane was only noticed as being fixed as a substitute at the chess-table while she and her lover were out walking; and as for her dying brother, not one syllable was bestowed on him, although the letter was going to the place where he lay on a bed of sickness. I can forgive excess of passion, I can pardon an excessive warmth of heart—but cold, calculating selfishness I cannot endure, and selfishness in a girl of fifteen or even seventeen is so unnatural a vice that it is doubly hateful.

Well, up stairs I went, with my head whirling, determined, in the first instance, to mention what had occurred: for, in fact, I was so little resolved how to act, that I held it prudent to keep this new episode in our family history a secret at present even from Harriet.

Contrasted with the scene just ended below was that which I beheld on entering my wife's room above. I had never beheld her angry before; but angry she was; and having been left by herself during my interview with Kittington to brood over her anger, was really quite animated. It was, however, of the gentlest nature of rage, and in its highest paroxysms never rose to fever heat. Woman-like, however, she disdained the idea of any longer affecting

civility or even toleration as regarded Mrs. Brandyball, or of submitting for any ulterior consideration to her imperious sway. The reference to matters of our domestic economy, which were so strictly confidential, seemed to irritate my poor love more than any thing, and the dictation about the wine and the wine-merchant, "so insolent!" "so impertinent!" "What business could Cuthbert have to tell *her*?" "As for his not recollecting whether my baby was a boy or a girl, I am glad of it," said Harriet. "He—though he is your brother—should not be its godfather, if it never had a godfather."

"Mercy on us, Harriet!" said I, laughing at the earnestness of her half-whispered rage: "why, where have you cherished all this volcanic fire which you are pouring out upon poor Cuthbert?"

"Poor Cuthbert!" said Harriet: "I wish, my dear Gilbert, he had been poor Cuthbert—we should then have been humbler, and happier, and independent."

"Never mind, my dear girl," said I; "recollect we can always fall back upon that—

'With thee conversing I forget all time.

All seasons, and their change—all please alike.'

I care as little or less than you for what are called the world's luxuries; but I do care for a brother's love. I lament the loss of that, and I think I ought to make a struggle to regain it."

"Why should you have lost it, Gilbert?" asked Harriet, naturally enough. "We did all we could to make him happy—unfortunately my approaching confinement prevented my showing Mrs. Brandyball so much attention as I otherwise would; but, as for Kate and——"

"Hah!" said I, involuntarily.

"I am sure all the children had their way," continued my poor wife.

"Yes, they have had their way too much," replied I: "but looking back is useless. The question is, how we are to act upon this letter? I know exactly, by the tenor of your conversation, the course you would pursue; but there are various things to be considered—more now than before—every hour adds new difficulties—new events transpire—in short, confusion seems worse confounded."

"Now, then," said Harriet, starting from her languid, listless attitude, "I know what Mr. Kittington has been here about."

I stared with astonishment.

"What," said I, with affected surprise, "can Mr. Kittington's calling here have to do with our decision upon that letter?"

"Every thing, Gilbert," said Harriet, shaking her head, as much as to deprecate my efforts at mystification. "It won't do, Gilbert; she has written him a love-letter."

"Why, Harriet," said I, thrown off my guard completely, "that girl Foxcroft has been listening."

"Not she, upon my honour, that I know of," said Harriet; "and I am not particularly grateful to you for supposing that I should pick up information by any such means; however, you have let out the secret, which was no secret to me; for although I was ignorant of the actual fact, I had seen enough of Miss Kitty's conduct to the man to be quite prepared for such an event. So, then, we shall afford conversation for the whole county."

"No, love, no," said I; "you have, with all a woman's prescience, hit upon the truth; but the secret is safe in the keeping of Mr. Kittington."

"Is that likely?" said Harriet.

"I will pledge my honour," said I; "but let me implore you to be equally cautious—not even to your mother drop a hint of the circumstance. The disclosure has laid a new load of difficulties upon us, and what is to be done must form a new feature of our present debate. Here is the precious epistle, in which the advantages of a brilliant boarding-school education develop themselves, not only in the expression of feelings and sentiments suited to other ages and stations than those of Miss Kitty, but in occasional orthographical slips, which prove, as Foote said of the "Agoos" which were "kurd hear," that the young ladies' fascinations are not spells. Upon my life the thing is so ridiculous that I cannot bring myself to be serious, however serious in point of fact the consequences may be."

Saying which I tossed the odoriferous *morceau* into her lap, and watched her as she read it.

"Exactly what I expected," said Harriet, as she laid down the note. And it appeared that her intuitive apprehension of the course likely to be pursued by Miss Kitty Falwasser was in some degree strengthened by the accounts which little—now growing big—Bettina—the amiable Betsy Wells—gave of the young lady's conversation and remarks upon "men and things," which were carried on and made in terms and in a tone that startled poor Betsy, but who, being two or three years older, used to listen to

them, in order, as she told her sisters, to endeavour to correct her junior's morals and amend her taste. I remember to have heard of a nobleman who engaged a governess in France who could not speak a word of English, in order that his daughter, whom he placed under her care, should learn French, through the acknowledged impossibility of speaking to the young preceptress in any other language. The plan did not however succeed to the fullest extent, for the young lady, preferring her native tongue, continued to speak it until the French governess had learnt it, when the necessity for their conversing in any other, ceased. Whether any similar effect was to be dreaded from Betsy Wells's attempts at the inculcation of morality and steadiness into Miss Kitty's mind, I do not pretend to say.

"Well, then," said Harriet, "it seems to me that we cannot possibly get out of all our difficulties, so let us give it up at once; send this charming letter to Cuthbert, and let him see the real merits and virtues of his delightful adopted daughter-in-law, and——"

"No, no," said I; "recollect we have poor Tom under our charge—let us not hastily overthrow the fabric of family affection. Cuthbert has been duped and imposed upon, but all his feelings are kindly——"

"To others, Gilbert," said Harriet.

"Not so only," replied I, for I could not overcome my brotherly feeling on the instant: "he has done much for me, and will do more. I must consider before I act: he has left a boy here whom he dearly loves."

"What a taste!" said Harriet.

"We must not judge of hearts by tastes, Harriet," said I. "Cuthbert feels bound to poor Tom Falwasser for his mother's sake, and tenderness in a step-father cannot be accounted a vice. No, I must wait and hear how the lad is, and then——"

"And then, my dear Gilbert," said Harriet, "only recollect that whatever our feelings may be towards your brother, we are not to be subjected to the government of Mrs. Brandyball."

"There it is," said I.

"And as for Kate," added my wife, "if this affair is kept from him, and any thing goes wrong with her afterwards, who will be blamed?—Why, you, my dear Gilbert, because you did not give him warning of her earlier proceedings."

"That's true," said I, "very true. But if I can send him good news of the boy, and prove to him our solicitude on his account, I am sure—although, as this woman says,

he feels now a little hurt—unreasonably, I admit—at my silence, which was unavoidable—he will come round, and all will be well; and as for Kate——”

Here Foxcroft's tap summoned me to the door. I went.

“Jim, the groom-boy, wants to speak to you, sir; he is just run up from Mr. Sniggs.

“Oh!” said I; and leaning over the balustrades, called to the lad to come to me.

“Well,” said I, “what's the message?”

“Whoy, zur,” said Jem, stepping close up to me; and whispering, “Mr. Sniggs's compliments—if you please, Zur, MASTER TOM'S DEAD!”

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## CHAPTER XII.

THIS intelligence, for which I certainly was by no means prepared, lost none of its effect by the tone and manner in which it was communicated by the boy. The suddenness with which all the hopes Sniggs had encouraged were dissipated, and a fatal result produced, added greatly to my sorrow and regret. In an instant every prospect was changed, and every proposition which I had suggested to myself as to my future conduct in my really trying and difficult situation altered. The worst that I had anticipated had happened at a moment when I did not expect it, and the darkness of my fate acquired new gloom from the contrast it afforded to the gleam of expectation produced by the apothecary's last note and bulletin.

“Is Mr. Sniggs coming here?” said I to the boy, when I had sufficiently recovered my composure to speak.

“Ees, Zur,” said the boy; “he be a-laying Master Tom out, I think; and when he ha done that, Doctor says he'll step up and tell ye all about it.”

The combination of ideas which flashed into my mind; the association of the painful duty, of which the groom spoke so carelessly, with Sniggs's subsequent visit to Ashmead, and my continued dread of the infection, made me



shudder; and I could have killed the fellow for having been so communicative upon a point so painful. He evidently saw nothing in his narrative calculated to excite any particular sensation on my part. His feelings were purely animal; and if it be true, as the naturalists tell us, that animal feeling is proportionably more or less acute according to the size of the animal itself, it is likewise equally true that mental sensibility decreases, in the exact ratio of enlightenment and civilization.

Shakspeare's doctrine, most beautiful to inculcate, infers no difference between the dying pains of a giant and those of a beetle; and if we have successfully controverted that humane opinion, we may surely be allowed to doubt whether the loss of a parent, child, or friend, equally affects the educated and refined portion of society and the rude, unlearned, and coarser classes of which my west-country rustic was one. I saw no sign of sorrow or of sympathy about him: he knew the boy was dead, and he knew that he must be buried—so did I; but with me the certainty of both events did not blunt the edge of their severity.

I dismissed the groom from farther parlance, and returned to Harriet, who seemed less surprised than I expected when I announced the catastrophe. Tears started into her eyes; but she was too ingenuous and too artless to conceal from me the fact that her distress was occasioned rather by the anticipation of what might be the consequences of the boy's death as connected with *me*, than by the event itself.

"What a thing to happen at such a time!" said she, "and to happen from the thoughtlessness or carelessness of the people to whose special care he was confided."

"Upon that point, Harriet," I replied, "it is not worth while to waste a thought; it may or may not be *that* which has produced this result; but, after all, nobody could have foreseen that a boy of his age would, under the circumstances, have done so mad a thing: that, however, is over and past recall, and the less said about it the better; for, if Cuthbert once heard of it, the fate of the unhappy Sniggs and his wife would be sealed. Let us consider what is now to be done: I suppose my original intention had better be put into execution—I had better start for Bath and break the affair to Cuthbert myself?"

"I don't know," said Harriet; "papa always says, never be the bearer of bad news."

"Yet," said I, "it is impossible to write this history—what can I—what ought I to do?"

"Consult papa," said Harriet; "the stories which he

tells of himself in early life justify you in applying to him. He never was at a loss ——”

“True,” said I; “but then he never was placed in such an extraordinary predicament. How I wish, my dear girl, that Cuthbert had not met me at Gosport, and that you and I had gone ——”

“Where,” said Harriet—for the sound sense of a woman always prevails—“where should we have gone to?—to a place which he had left and then we should have had to come ——”

“Bock again,” said I, “as the Scotchman said when his leg was over the man’s wall—that’s true; and bad as things look, my girl, I will still cling to my creed, and say every thing is for the best. I’ll go ——”

“That will be for the worst,” said Harriet; “you have never left me since we were married—I can’t bear your absence.”

“Pshaw!” said I. “An affair of three days, or four at most.”

“Yes,” said Harriet, “the time seems short; but only recollect what is to happen during that period: what events are to be told—what effects to be produced; your brother, if left to himself, would, I have no doubt, be as reasonable as he is, I believe, affectionate; but worked upon by active, artful people, depend upon it, my dear Gilbert, the whole thing will be misrepresented and ——”

“I am quite aware of *that*,” said I; “but the question to be considered is, whether my personal presence and a *vivâ voce* description of what has happened would not conduce more to his tranquillization than a letter: the letter, recollect, would be open to the review and criticism of the whole crew—Mrs. Brandyball leading the van. If I *go*, I am there myself to explain, and describe, and modify. I had better go.”

I saw that Harriet still thought I had better not. However, considering that during my absence she would be surrounded by her own family and occupied in attending to mine—if the word could be applicable to one little baby—I felt less difficulty in leaving her, the more especially as my stay at Cuthbert’s would be so extremely short.

My deliberations and consultations, however, were broken in upon by the arrival of Sniggs, the announcement of whose name in connexion with the duty which, according to the groomboy’s account, he had been performing, produced something like a shudder on my frame, but whom, of course, it was most essential I should see. I accordingly went

down stairs, and am almost ashamed to own how unwillingly; suffice it to say, without attempting to describe them, that my feelings, whatever they were, were by no means moderated by seeing both my pet dogs worrying about and sniffing the worthy apothecary's clothes, as if they were aware of the presence of an odour which might breathe infection in my yet untainted house. I drove them out of the room with an abruptness of manner and severity of tone very unusual with me in my intercourse with dumb animals.

"Well, sir," said Sniggs, "this is a sad business; I had hoped better things: however, it is a consolation to myself and Mrs. Sniggs to know that every thing was done that could be done."

Yes, thought I, and something more than need have been done.

"I never saw an instance where fever increased so rapidly—it was irresistible—an effusion of blood on the brain terminated the struggle. Poor fellow! he suffered greatly during the night and became delirious, and at the last was quite unconscious of what was passing—when will he be buried, sir?"

"That is a matter upon which I can say nothing till I have seen my brother," said I.

"You propose going to him, then?" said Sniggs.

"I think so."

"Because," continued the apothecary, "it struck me that, perhaps, having had charge of him, having attended him, and watched him through the progress of the disease, it might have been, in some degree, consolatory and satisfactory to Mr. Gurney if I were to go to him myself: I could explain more correctly and minutely the circumstances of the case, and——"

"But," said I, "your patients here!"

"Oh," said Sniggs, "I can arrange all that—my friend Pillman would take charge of *them*; besides, my own assistant is perfectly able to do that. This is no time for joking; but you know what Pillman said to the bishop who refused to ordain him, because he was not properly qualified——"

"He said, 'my lord, I regret this refusal more for the sake of others than myself—it may cause the death of hundreds.' 'How so, sir?' said the bishop. 'Why, my lord,' replied Pillman, 'If I do not get into the church, I must follow my father's profession, and practise physic.'"

Sniggs, I fancy, saw in the expression of my countenance

that I did not particularly admire the tone and manner of his conversation at such a moment; for he suddenly threw an extra proportion of grief into his strange-looking features, and inquired in a mournful tone whether I approved of his proposal.

It struck me that it would be an exceedingly good plan; but I determined not to sanction it without farther consultation in the family cabinet. It was not difficult to discover divers and sundry reasons why the active son of Æsculapius was both ready and willing to undertake the expedition. In the first place he would show his anxiety and sympathy; in the second, he would explain the case more favourably for himself, carefully concealing, no doubt, the episode of the cherry-brand, which as I felt, although I did not admit, had mainly contributed to the catastrophe; and, in the third place, his extra attention and rapid journey, to the manifest prejudice and neglect of all his other patients, would give him a substantial claim upon Cuthbert's liberality, which, after the melancholy termination of the boy's illness, might probably require some powerful stimulants in the way of counteracting the grief and disappointment of the hopes he had entertained of the apothecary's skill.

"Well," said I, "I will go and talk this over with Mrs. Gurney; and if we agree in thinking your scheme available, when shall you be ready to start?"

"In an hour," said Sniggs. "I have given all the necessary orders with respect to the body, and every thing will go on perfectly well in my absence, subject to such instructions as Mr. Gurney may give me, which, of course, I shall hurry back to fulfil."

"Will you wait five minutes?" said I.

"I am at your orders," replied Sniggs. "I don't know whether it is quite luncheon time, but if it is—and I assure you I am deuced hungry—hav'n't had time to eat a morsel this morning—and you are for my going, I would take a snack, which would save time, and I could order horses as I went by the King's Head, and so come round here for your letter."

"Luncheon you shall have," said I, not entirely forgetting what his morning's occupations had been, and wondering only that they should be in any degree conducive to a good appetite.

I ordered the luncheon to be hurried, and went up stairs to Harriet.

It was a rule in the navy in war time, and which I believe is sometimes observed in a period of profound peace,

that a captain of a man-of-war was never to sail with his wife on board his ship, inasmuch as, aware of the tremendous and overwhelming influence of women, the admiralty thought her presence might shake the bravest of men, and that the sight of her anxieties and sufferings for *him* personally might unnerve the strongest mind that the disposition of Providence ever assigned to humanity. By a parity of reasoning, in a matter of infinitely inferior importance I ought not to have consulted Harriet, whose anxiety for my remaining at home had been already so decidedly manifested, upon the delicate question of staying or going to Cuthbert: still I had such perfect confidence in her ingenuousness, and so strong a conviction of the entire disinterestedness of women, when the results were not likely to be vitally serious to a beloved object (as I flattered myself I was) that I forthwith repaired to my better half, stated the proposal of Sniggs, and asked her what she thought of it.

It was quite superfluous to wait for her answer—at least in words; the bright sparkle of her eye, and the delight which beamed in her countenance told me her opinion; and I believe she was perfectly right; the more readily, perhaps, because I had already made up my mind to the judiciousness of the new arrangement. So far, so good; but as she expressed a desire that I should communicate with her father, I agreed to wait until he could be summoned into council.

Now, as luck would have it, although events seldom turn up propitiously, who should walk himself into the hall of Ashmead just at this critical juncture but Wells; and, to say truth, pleased as I always was to see and welcome him to my home, I never was more gratified by hearing that he had arrived, and joined Sniggs in the dining-room, where *à l'ordinaire* the noontide board had been spread.

"Nothing can be better," said Wells, after having heard the proposition; "write, my dear Gilbert, such a letter as your heart will dictate; let our friend be its bearer, and then only consider the weight that his description of the pains and care which have been taken in poor Tom's case will have with your brother, already greatly prepossessed in his favour."

"Exactly so," said Sniggs. "I know every turn and shade of the disease—have minutely watched each change—made minutes of the prognosis—all down in black and white—and I think Mr. Gurney will have every reason to be satisfied with my conduct."

"Besides," said Wells to me, in one of the windows to which we had retired, "you will get rid of the necessity of alluding to other subjects to which, if you went, you must unquestionably refer."

I looked innocent.

"I mean about the dancing-master," said Wells. "You could not see Cuthbert or the girl without touching upon *that*."

"What?" said I.

"Pshaw!" said Wells; "what's the use of making those 'damnable faces?' as Shakspeare has it. I know all. You have a wife; so have I: do you suppose such a story could be shaken in a family colander without running through? Mum! not another word: the world say that a secret is a great thing for one, a charming thing for two, and nothing for three; but we are tiled. I know, and it goes no farther: but you could not, I repeat—it would be impossible, and if not impossible, in the highest degree improper, for you to see your brother without telling him the whole of that business. What would be the consequence? A split either between Kitty and you, or Cuthbert and you. Let well alone. You have no business to go out of your way to interfere: here the opportunity offers; nothing can be more attentive or respectful than that the medical man who has attended the boy should instantly proceed to the man who engaged his attentions, in order to report the state of the case. The responsibility is entirely shifted from your shoulders; and while this manifestation of deep interest is made by the person immediately employed, the expression of your own feelings will come with double force. I would," added Wells, "tell him how readily you would obey the slightest intimation on *his* part of a wish to see you. If he desired you to visit him, you would go, the road smoothed, the great difficulty overcome; he would know the painful truth not from *you*, and be delighted to enjoy your society, as calculated to sooth his wounded feelings."

"I am quite prepared to adopt the plan," said I, "not only because I like it myself, but because it meets with your concurrence. So be it, then. I will sit down and write such a letter as I feel I ought to write, and Sniggs shall carry the intelligence and describe the particulars, take all his directions as to the funeral, and return forthwith to obey them. We are agreed, Sniggs," said I, leaving the recess in which our colloquy had taken place; "You *shall* go, tell your own history, and come back with all the necessary instructions; and assure my brother, besides what I shall

write, that I will take care that every wish that he expresses shall be realized to the letter."

Sniggs seemed greatly elated by the decision, and somewhat invigorated by three or four glasses of wine, and two ditto of not particularly weak ale, with which he had washed down his luncheon, expressed what really did not seem an unreasonable wish, that, if I did not particularly want my chariot, my lending it to him would very much accelerate his journey, inasmuch as it would obviate the delay of changing chaises.

"Sniggs is right," said Wells; "the fact that he comes in your carriage will exhibit a new proof to Cuthbert of the interest you take in the business. Quite right—that is it."

"And," said Sniggs, "there is one word more I would say—we are among friends—and I have no difficulty in saying that—upon my life, I hardly know how to mention it either—but, the truth is, that I have not at command enough—"

"Oh!" said I, stopping him, "of course, you are to be at no charge for this trip; it is business, and business of ours. No, no! I'll arrange all that. You shall have that point settled immediately." And I accordingly went to my library and drew a check for forty pounds which I begged him to get cashed at the bank (for we *had* a bank at Blissfold,) and appropriate as much of the amount as was necessary to defray the charges of the journey.

"Liberal soul!" said Sniggs of me to Wells, as he afterwards told me; "indeed, sir, he ought to be the rich brother of the two, and will, I conclude, eventually be so. Wonderful to see how wealth and stinginess go hand in hand. You know those people who sit just over you at church—the girls with green pelisses and red bonnets, like a little pair of parroquets who can't live single—the Kurmichens;—their father, when he was alive, was the stingiest dog going;—cellars full—binns topped up—and all that—never gave any wine after dinner—but went on like a house in the Old Town of Edinburgh, story upon story, to save his claret—never could get him to bleed. So one day giving a description of a friend of his who had fallen blind in consequence of consulting a celebrated oculist, he said, 'Why, sir! Buggins is as blind as a beetle—can't see any more than that bottle.' Whereupon one of the visitors, a wag of the first water, said, 'Then our cases are exactly alike, sir, for we can see no more than that bottle; we wish we could.' He! he! that's not bad."

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"On the contrary," said Wells; "but I don't believe Gurney's brother is at all parsimonious. All that I fear is his being led away—influenced to turn his liberality into channels which ought never to have been dug—that Mrs. Brandyball——"

"Mum!" said Sniggs; "I know a good deal about her—more than I ever thought I should. People *will* talk—and there is a person in Blissfold who knew the husband's nephew—not that ever I peep or pry—I never poke *my* nose into other people's concerns—but one can't stop his ears, and I receive—however, it is no affair of mine."

"I cannot help thinking," said Wells, "that she *has* a great influence over Mr. Gurney."

"Influence!" said Sniggs; "you have no notion what she is, if what I am obliged to hear is true. However, Mr. Wells, my maxim is to listen to all, and say nothing, and therefore I hope to stand well with all parties."

Wells made one of his acquiescent bows, which went for little; for although he himself had been quieted down by time, the crack of the whip was not more familiar to the old coachman's ear, than were the professions made by the worthy apothecary of a total disinclination from the failing of tittle-tattle, or of the still more important crime of scan-mag.

"Of course," said Wells, "you will represent our good friend Gilbert's conduct in a proper light. The fact is, that we could not pay any immediate personal attention to the poor lad——"

"Nor was any necessary," said Sniggs, warming with the subject and the sherry. "I declare, Mr. Wells, that not a thing was left undone that could be done to save him. His constitution had been undermined by previous indulgence—he was a self-willed boy, too—and his diet had been loosely attended to; or rather, his appetite had been gratified at the cost of his health ever since he came to England. More lives are lost, and more constitutions destroyed, by a reckless indulgence in early youth than by any other things in the world. However, poor lad, he is gone. I suppose Mr. Gurney will have a tablet put up in the church to his memory. If so, I shall venture to recommend Clipstone. You know Clipstone, sir?"

"Yes," said the rector; "who lives opposite the Plough."

"Exactly, sir," said Sniggs. "Valuable family—very estimable people—always ailing. Wife, Mrs. C., never well—camphorated julep and concomitant brandy-and-water; eldest daughter epileptic—powders incessantly; the



son hepatitis—calomel *ad libitum*; Elizabeth slight touch of scrofula—calls it rheumatism—do what I can; the two younger boys mal-conformation of chest. Father excellent man—full of talent—with a taste in tombstones quite remarkable. I think he will do a smart slab for Tom, on the most moderate terms.”

Considering that poor Tom, for whose smart slab Sniggs was, in his own mind, bargaining, had been dead some few hours only—the conversation struck Wells as somewhat abrupt, and even premature; but the fact was, that Sniggs, having obtained, or being about to obtain, his credentials for the mournful embassy upon which he was going, and, moreover, having the promise of means to grease the wheels of my carriage on the journey, totally cast off the grief which he at first felt it his duty to assume, and which it is, as I have before observed, scarcely reasonable to expect a medical man in tolerable practice really to feel. Indeed, if he *did* feel strongly during the progress of a disease, his judgment might be affected by that very sensibility, and he might be rendered incapable of doing his duty steadily and fearlessly—a point most essential under such circumstances.

It was about this period of the conversation, as Wells afterwards told me, that I re-entered the dining-room, and put into Sniggs's hand the check of which I had spoken. In consequence of my lending him my carriage, the horses were to be ordered up to Ashmead, and he was to return, after having had his portmanteau and *sac de nuit* packed, and sent up by his footboy with the pale face and glazed hat, and to start from my door in an hour from the then present time, which hour I was to devote to the concoction of my letter to Cuthbert.

About half past two, Sniggs, armed with his check, departed, and Wells, who never could resist a joke—not unseemly to his cloth—directed my attention to the uncertain course taken by the worthy apothecary from the hall-door down towards the gates of Ashmead—there was an unconscious adherence to the line of beauty which would have delighted Hogarth himself. Whether the elevation of our practitioner was attributable more to the draught he had swallowed, or the draft which he had deposited in his pocket, we did not attempt to ascertain. Certain it was, that in the midst of his sorrow for Tom, he was happy for himself, and I have no doubt saw before him a bright prospect of patronage and support from my poor dear brother—whose most sanguine hopes he had frustrated, by lending his involuntary aid to the removal, from this sublunary world of troubles, of Master Thomas Falwasser.

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"As soon as he was clear of the lodge, I sat down and wrote what I thought the best possible letter to my brother—expressing our united griefs at the sad event, and referring him for particulars to the bearer. I entreated him to let me know what he wished me to do with regard to the necessary ceremonies to be performed, and assured him that his directions should be fulfilled to the letter. I made all proper inquiries after the two young ladies, and desired my best compliments to Mrs. Brandyball, whose letter I should have answered, had not the melancholy occurrence changed the whole course of events. I made Harriet join in the kindest remembrances to him, with a proper proportion of condolence, and her best regards to his daughters, as he called, and, I believe, really fancied them; and at last obtained her permission to send a civil message to the gentle B. herself. This, I admit, was extracted; but, as I argued that it was as well to be at peace with all, at such a season, Harriet at last complied.

In less than an hour the horses came—the Sniggs boy, with the trunk and bag, and the Sniggs himself, dressed in deep mourning, with a four inch crape round his hat, and a face to match. I had a few minutes' *tête-à-tête* conversation with him, in which I stated my wishes as to the manner in which he should explain most clearly how totally I had been incapacitated from paying any personal attentions to poor Tom, and wound up our dialogue by saying to him, "I think, Mr. Sniggs, you had better not say any thing about the cherry brandy."

"Not a word," said Sniggs looking excessively foolish.

This parting admonition I considered a masterpiece of policy, inasmuch as, if he did not pursue the exact course I had laid down for him in his conversation with Cuthbert, it reminded him that I had the fact in store to overthrow all his professions of unremitting attention to his amiable patient.

Before the clock struck four the carriage was ready, and all his traps being disposed of, in and about the vehicle, the excellent apothecary deposited himself in the inside, and the palefaced urchin with the glazed hat having mounted into the rumble, away they drove to my inexpressible delight in having been so strangely delivered from what could not have failed to be the most painful and embarrassing expedition I had ever undertaken.

When the traveller was out of sight I proceeded to Harriet to announce the fact of his departure, and to deliberate upon the probable issue of his expedition, and then I found

that Fanny and her lover had quarrelled; the cause of their quarrel I concluded was trifling, and, believing in the certainty of the consequences of the *iræ amantium*, I merely smiled at the absurdity of their "fall out," as Miss Foxcroft would have called it.

"My dear Harriet," said I, "we have enough upon our hands at present with our own affairs, do not let us meddle with those of others; rely upon it the hostile parties will, before the day is over, make it up, kiss, and be friends again."

"I doubt that," said Harriet. "The cause of their difference I do not yet know; but Fanny hints at its being something important, and she is not a girl to take offence unreasonably or hastily. Papa is not in the least aware of it, whatever it is: however, this evening she will be here, and I shall know the particulars."

"I tell you, Harriet," said I, "before this evening comes the quarrel will be over, so let us talk of matters more immediately interesting. It strikes me that Cuthbert will wish poor Tom to be buried somewhere near his present residence, which, I think seems likely to be a permanent one; in that case, I shall of course consider it my duty to accompany his remains. My meeting with Cuthbert will, however painful, be less irksome than it would be at present, inasmuch as he will be acquainted with all the melancholy facts of the case."

"You must act as your judgment dictates," said Harriet, "and according to circumstances. My belief is, that he is so completely under the influence of Mrs. Brandyball, that it will be to her that we shall have to look for instructions."

"I have no doubt," said I, "that her object will be to cast all possible blame upon us; and certainly, if I am likely to be subjected to any censure from Cuthbert in her presence or under her suggestion, I shall altogether abstain from visiting him, let the consequences be what they may."

It is hardly worth recording the various conversations which occurred between Harriet and myself upon this engrossing and embarrassing topic. The tone and spirit of her observations and suggestions evinced a higher degree of indignation toward Cuthbert's weakness, and a greater restlessness under the weight of his previous favours, than I could induce myself to feel. To be sure, the tie of relationship which moderated *my* sentiments upon his extraordinary conduct was not binding upon *her*; but I must say I never expected to see her so much excited upon any serious subject as she was, whenever the dependency of our position made itself evident in the course of our discussions.

The windows of Ashmead were darkened, and the heavy bell of Blissfold church was tolled—a ceremony, by the way, originating in the grossest superstition, and in its performance fraught with the greatest evil. Those who merely take things as they come, and, like the mole, fancy they are very deep, when they are, in fact, close to the surface, consider the heavy swinging of the “passing bell” a matter of respect to the memory of the dead; whereas the object, if any there be, in making the dismal noise produced by a hireling’s pulling a rope in a belfry is to keep away devils, and imps, and spirits from interfering with the passage of the soul departed, in its flight towards heaven. The history of bells would fill more pages of my notes than I can spare—as it is, however, tolerably well known to the commonly enlightened, I regret that fact the less; but of one thing I am quite certain—whatever benefit might have been supposed, in the days of Popery, to be derivable from tolling at so much per hour, the mischief done to society in Protestant countries, where we do not expect so much spiritual advantage from the process, is obviously grave and serious. A sick man lies on his bed within a few yards of a church-steeple; in the wretchedness of his disorder he hears the hollow boom of the passing bell—“Who’s dead?” is his first natural question.—“Poor Mr. Hawkins, sir,” says the nurse. “What did he die of?” asks the patient, flickering out of life.—“Of an abscess in the lungs,” says the communicative crone. Abscess of the lungs is the patient’s disorder; every sound of the bell produces upon his mind a new pang—a new excitement; and those who know how intimately the mind and body are connected must know what the effect producible by this reiteration of the deathly evidence will be. With women under more delicate and trying circumstances its fatality has been established. Reform it altogether.

However, the bell was tolled; and because Master Thomas Falwasser was a young gentleman, the big bell tolled. If he had been a poor child, no bell would have been tolled: if he had been one of what are called the middling classes, a smaller bell would have been tolled. But the big bell costs most to toll, inasmuch as Durandus tells us, it being so much louder than the others, the devils are obliged to keep farther away to be out of its sound. If this be not disgusting mockery, what is?—the ringing of bells at a wedding, if the people who pay the ringers delight in campanology, is all very well; and we suppose by the length of the peal, and the number of the bells, that no devils or

imps will dare to annoy the happy couple for a certain time. And yet look at the absurdity of *that*—to pay a set of strangers, men who have never heard your names before, and never will again, to make a joyous sound, in the joyousness of which they take no part, and for being enthusiastic in making which they get their two or three guineas, or less, as the case may be,—for that which renders the absurdity the greater is, that they are thus joyous only *ad valorem*, the length and strength of the spirit-stirring peal being uniformly proportioned to the amount disbursed.

To my ear the tolling was most discordant, and reminded me, as the sound ever did, of that which I first heard in hastening to Teddington to receive my poor kind mother's last blessing. The impression made upon me that morning never will, never can be effaced; and perhaps, after all, my rooted antipathy to bells has its origin in that occurrence.

The day passed on till dinner-time, the usual time of meeting in a family. My father-in-law and I dined *tête-à-tête*. Mrs. Wells and Fanny were to come to Harriet in the evening—Lieutenant Merman was gone on a little excursion—for that I was prepared. Wells seemed unconscious of the reason of his absence, and I, really hating the disagreeable “son of Mars,” as he would be figuratively called by the gentlemen of the press, was glad to let him and all his turmoils sink into oblivion, while I still “harped,” as the immortal bard has it, upon the one subject nearest my heart.

“That Merman,” said the rector, “is a very odd man, Gurney.”

“Is he?” said I.

“His violence is quite extraordinary upon the most ordinary occasions,” said Wells; “you know me pretty well—you know I give and take—all fair in conversation: and as I consider—nobody knows himself, to be sure—but, as I consider myself, I take myself to be an average good-humoured man. Well, yesterday, I was playfully discussing a variety of topics upon which he and I ordinarily disagree, and after vindicating institutions which he underrates and vilifies, and maintaining principles which he ridicules, I happened to tell him an anecdote—you know I am not over particular upon such points—which occurred to myself when I was for a short time examining-chaplain to my excellent connexion and patron the Bishop. A young man came for examination, and it so happened that the Bishop had no Greek Testament at hand—the thing occurred in London—Bishop asked me—I had not one, and so, without saying any thing

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more, I went and got hold of the first book I could find, and examined my young friend in Latin—he succeeded to my heart's content, but it so happened that the book was Lucian *De Morte Peregrini*, a tract which he wrote against Christianity. I told the thing as a joke, upon which this Merman drew up and looked grave, and went off to the women, and I have never seen him since. I believe, by Jove, that a man ought never to joke with a dullard; he takes as matter of fact that which is really matter of fun;—and, rely upon it, Merman is an ass, though I say it, who shouldn't."

"I had no idea," said I, "that the Lieutenant was strait-laced."

"Nor I," said Wells, "except in his uniform; nor does the history of his affair with Miss Maloney go quite smooth with me."

I saw by this reference to what had been a healed wound, that the rector was what may be called "put out," and that Harriet, when she spoke of the seriousness of the difference between the Lieutenant and her sister, was not altogether wrong in treating it as a matter of importance.

"The gentleman," said Wells, "has marched himself off; and between you and me, Gilbert, if he never was to march himself back again, I should not much care."

"But," said I, "my dear sir, matters seem to have gone so far now, and he has been so unequivocally received as one of the family, that——"

"Pshaw!" interrupted the rector, "what of *that*? It requires time to know a man. His manner last night was extremely offensive to me; and from what I afterwards saw in the drawing-room, I don't think that the sequel was much more agreeable to Fanny."

"Fanny," said I, "is a kind-hearted ingenuous girl, and, devoted to you: and if she thought that any thing the Lieutenant said was meant to vex and annoy you, my belief is that she would seriously resent it."

"So do I," said Wells, "and—this is of course between ourselves—my notion is—I may be wrong—that the way in which he caught up a mere fact—a truth—a thing which did occur, but which I perhaps might as well not have repeated, except as I did repeat it under my own roof, and in what I considered my own family, is attributable to some new change in his affair with his aunt and the fortune; and that the indignation which he expressed at the mode in which he had been treated by the heiress, has been by some means or other modified and moderated, and that he is now anxious,

late as it is in the course of our acquaintance, to break off the connexion."

"If Fanny say yea," exclaimed I, "let it be so—he is not the man to make any woman happy, and much less my sister-in-law."

"I have heard nothing," said Wells, "of what occurred between Fan and him. I merely spoke of his extraordinary conduct, and a determination on my part not to submit to a line of behaviour which he is by no means entitled to adopt in my house."

I now began to think, from seeing Wells infinitely more excited than I had ever found him, that the quarrel between Fanny and her intended was a "mighty pretty quarrel as it stood," and that however far advanced the negotiations of the high contracting powers actually were, I might even yet have the satisfaction of seeing them frustrated. It must be admitted that the little *contre-temps* occurring at the moment was somewhat unseasonable, and yet I can scarcely tell why I did not so much dislike it, inasmuch as it presented "a diversion" (in the military sense of the word) from the "Siege of Troubles" by which we were assailed.

When I had enjoyed a *tête-à-tête* with Harriet, I found that Fanny's anger, as regarded the lieutenant, was by no means ill-founded. He, without principle, either religious or moral, that any body had ever yet discovered, chose to arraign Wells's conduct in describing—probably without any serious foundation—the circumstances of the examination. *He*, Merman, not knowing Lucian from Lucretius, and evidently seizing upon a point in conversation of no importance to *him*, at all events, to make a quarrel. Fanny told her sister that the mode in which the lieutenant spoke of her father, and his conduct as what he called himself, "a Christian preacher and teacher," was such that it was to her as incomprehensible as it was unbearable—that he had reproached her with her want of fortune; expressed in strong terms the condescension which he had evinced on his part, in returning to her after his disappointment; and in short, conducted himself with so much abruptness, to call it by no other term, that she had resolved to take her own course upon it, without communicating the details to her father, whose high spirit, notwithstanding the difference of their ages and professions, might lead him into some extremity with regard to his intended son-in-law, which would be most distressing under all circumstances, and probably disastrous under some.

The facts were these—what the motives to action on the

part of Lieutenant Merman might be, remains to be explained—I admit that although I still dwelt upon the one sad and important theme in which our destinies were unquestionably involved, I was not ill-pleased that this little contention had arisen, inasmuch as it nearly occupied Harriet's mind, and held out to me the prospect of getting rid of a connexion with a man the most odious I had ever fallen in with, and the least likely, as I sincerely believed, to make my kind hearted sister-in-law a happy woman.

Two days rolled on—the Lieutenant did not return—neither did Fanny receive any letter from him; and so far all *that* part of our family was involved in mystery and surmise; not so we; the morning of the third day from poor Tom's death brought us a letter from Sniggs, who wrote word that he had arrived safely at Montpelier—that he had communicated the sad story to my poor brother Cuthbert, who was so much overcome as to be utterly unable to decide what he should wish to have done. Sniggs added, in postscript, that he had expressed himself perfectly satisfied with his care and attention, and that of Mrs. Sniggs, towards the innocent sufferer; but regretted that when I knew the dear child was on the point of death, I had not gone to catch the last wishes of his life from his dying lips, and that Mrs. Brandyball had said, sobbingly, "It was most extraordinary how any body so nearly connected with the dear boy could have abstained from visiting him in his illness."

"Monstrous!" I exclaimed to myself. "The woman knew that one visit might have been as fatal as his constant occupation of his room at Ashmead—that the existence of my first, my only infant, depended upon care and caution: and what she did not know, perhaps, was, that up to the moment when I abruptly heard of his death, I was led on by the flattering representation of Sniggs to look for his recovery. These are the things that sting one to the heart—misrepresentations, which one has no means of correcting—falsehoods, which one has no opportunity of controverting. Sniggs said the way in which Mrs. Brandyball was affected was something quite maternal, and added, "If you could only see, my dear sir, the devoted attention of this excellent lady to your dear brother, you would feel inclined to worship her."

This from Sniggs!—"Et tu, Brute!"—and after what he had hinted—not to *me*, but to Wells. This was indeed

"—— the most unkindest cut of all!"

But it was perhaps natural—he was playing *his* game with Cuthbert—expatiating on his carefulness, and watchfulness, and constant superintendence. If Mrs. Brandyball had occu-



pied poor Tom's room at Sniggs's two nights before he went into it, and the cupboard had been open, my opinion is, that Tom would have been alive now—for certain is it, that the searching eye and sensitive nose of the convivial dame, would have discovered the potion which killed *him*, but would only have comforted *her*.

Sniggs informed me that I was to hear again to-morrow, so that *he* had made good his footing at Montpelier; and then he tells me of the wonderful improvement in Kate's appearance even in that short time; that Mrs. Brandyball thought Ashmead unwholesome; that Jane was looking more rosy; and that, although dreadfully upset by the melancholy intelligence he had received, Cuthbert himself was marvellously better, as far as health went.

When I read the letter to Harriet she perfectly coincided with me—Sniggs was now joined in the conspiracy against us, and the influence of the Gorgon had been successfully exerted to link *him* to the faction by which we were to be sacrificed. Still we were left in suspense: not one line from Cuthbert to me—not a syllable in the way of invitation thither—not a mention of when or where the funeral was to be performed; all things seemed to be at a stand-still, waiting, I supposed, until my unfortunate brother could be shaken out of his reverie to come to a resolution.

I confess Sniggs' letter was something more than I expected—it was a new grievance, a new affront. I had sent him in my own carriage, a messenger from myself, and to receive his answer and not a word from the nearest relation I had in the world—no, not even Mrs. Brandyball had condescended to put pen to paper. I felt myself now really fallen, and I am not ashamed to own that I sobbed with grief at the loss of a brother to whom I, and those who belonged to me, had devoted every effort and energy to make him happy and comfortable, and who was happy and comfortable before this fiend in scarcely human shape had inveigled him away from us.

There was something in Sniggs' letter which sounded reproachful, evidently dedicated, or rather occasioned by other people; and when I began to calculate and consider all the circumstances, I could not help beginning to fancy that there really was something in my conduct which might be construed into a want of feeling, not only by Cuthbert, but even by the neighbours. The poor boy *had* died in a strange house; he *had* been removed from the comforts of Ashmead—comforts how secured?—to the apothecary's residence, without a relation near him, and there he had died, and there his body lay: but, then, the infection—true, but then the man who had been

constantly in attendance upon *him*, came to *me*. How can I describe the ten thousand feelings by which I was assailed! And yet I do declare that the loss of the mere favour of Cuthbert in a worldly sense, perilous and destructive as it might be, was but a mole-hill in comparison with the mountain-like load of grief I experienced at the deprivation of his affection.

Well, the next day came; no letter by the post. Mrs. Sniggs sent up her compliments to beg to know whether we had heard from Mr. S.—Answer, not a word.—This was very strange; the funeral ought to take place as speedily as convenient; she wondered she had not got a letter, and so on. To me the silence was still more curious. However, as reason comes to one's aid even under the most trying circumstances, it at last struck me, and in that opinion Harriet agreed, that Sniggs would himself return in the course of the day, and so supersede the necessity of writing. We were not wrong; but we were not entirely right; we guessed the truth to a certain extent, but not the whole truth. At about six o'clock, just as I was sitting down in my wife's room to enjoy a *tête-à-tête* whiting and boiled chicken, a violent ringing at the gate announced an arrival; dogs barked as usual, servants scuffled, and, leaning over the balustrade, I heard Sniggs's voice directing his pale-faced flunky to take of his bag and box and carry them home. I heard other voices, I thought, and a rustling of petticoats crossing the hall to the dinner-room, which was dark and unoccupied, for I was settled in for a snug consolatory evening up-stairs. The rustling noise came forth again, and I heard my man say, "My master is up-stairs, Miss." I held my breath and listened; it was all true. Sniggs waited in the hall, as a gentleman not of the family ought to do, but in less than two minutes I felt myself embraced and my cheeks wetted with the tears of Miss Kitty Falwasser and her sister Jane.

"This," said I, gently repelling Kate's excessive warmth of manner, "*is* a surprise."

"Yes," said Kate, sobbing so that you might have heard her to the wine-cellar door; "we could—not—let—poor dear Tom go to the grave without—some one—who loved him being with—him; and dear pappy is not well enough to come—and dear governess could not leave him—so—so—so we have come to go to his funeral."

Jane, less violent in her grief, but more sincere, pressed my hand and wept silently. I saw she felt for the loss of her brother, uncouth as he was and harsh to her; for Jane was as different a creature from Kate as a discriminating observer of nature could well discover.

"I am glad to see you, dears," said I; and I felt glad that the gallery round the hall was not well lighted, lest my looks

should not have entirely corresponded with my words. "I will go and tell Harriet you are here; your sudden appearance in her room might flurry her."

"How is she, dear thing?" said Kate.

"Oh, quite well," said I; "and how is my brother in health?"

"What, pappy?" said Kate, who seemed scarcely to comprehend what I meant by the fraternal appellation. "He is pretty well in health, dear; but so shocked at the news, that we thought he would have died; I think he would if Mr. Sniggs hadn't been there."

"He thought you would have come to him," said Jane; "and your not coming, I think, vexed him a good deal."

That's pleasant, thought I. However, it was necessary, now that the thing had taken its present turn, that Harriet should be apprized of the state of affairs, and I accordingly announced the arrival.

"I cannot look at Kate with patience," said Harriet. I know why *she* has come. What a silly, silly man your poor dear brother is!"

"Never mind," said I; "we have no course but one to pursue, so make up your mind to be civil."

"Dear Gilbert," said Harriet, giving me one of her kindest looks, "whatever you wish me to do, I will do if I can; but the struggle is a difficult one, and not the less so from being so totally unexpected."

In five minutes the young ladies were kissing Harriet on the dexter and sinister sides of her face, weeping as they thought became them, and in half an hour more a refecton was prepared in the dining-room, at which, dragged away from my sanctum up-stairs, I presided; and Sniggs and the two mourning nymphs assisted.

What happened next day I reserve for the next portion of my notes.

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